



BRATACH DUBH

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Insurrectionary Writings

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Anarchism and the National Liberation Struggle
Anarchist Pamphlets 1
1976

The Struggle Against Fascism Begins with the
Struggle Against Bolshevism
1981

Worker's Autonomy
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**Anarchism and the
National Liberation Struggle**

Introduction

Anarchists have tended to shy away from the problem of the national liberation struggle or rejected it entirely because of their internationalist principles.

If internationalism is not to be merely meaningless rhetoric, it must imply solidarity between the proletariat of different countries or nations. This is a concrete term. When there is a revolution, it will be as it has been in the past, in a precise geographical area. How much it remains there will be directly linked to the extent of that internationalism, both in terms of solidarity and of the spreading of the revolution itself.

The patriotism of the people at a basic, unadulterated level is the struggle for their own autonomy, a natural urge, a 'product of the life of a social group united by bonds of genuine solidarity and not yet enfeebled by reflection or by the effect of economic and political interests as well as religious abstractions'. (Bakunin) Just as the State is an anti-human construction, so is nationalism a concept designed to transcend and thwart the class struggle which exists wherever capitalism does (all over the world). If the efforts of the people who are living in the social and economic ferment of what is happening under the name of national liberation are left to their leaders, they risk finding themselves no better off than before, living in micro-corporate States under whatever flag is chosen for them. Anti-imperialism can mask

local corporatism if the struggle is not put in class terms at a micro- as well as macroscopic level. As the following article demonstrates, many of the Marxist groups engaged in national liberation struggles are none too clear on this point.

Alfredo Bonanno's article was written in response to a real situation, that of Italy, and in particular, Sicily. At the present time III that country, where economic and political disintegration is rife, the weakest link (Sicily) is being subjected to propaganda and actions directed towards creating a state of tension in order to lay the shaky foundations for a separatist solution. This solution, a separate Sicilian State, is being proposed by the forces of the right, i.e. the fascists, who have formed a tenuous working alliance with the Mafia, who together are the willing servants of US interests through the intermediary of the CIA. Each party has its own interests to establish and protect: the Mafia would gain access to political contacts and facilities for financial transactions, the Americans would keep their hold on an economy which is at present seeking solutions from the Communist Party, and maintain a strategic base in the Mediterranean, and the fascists, once in power, would gain credibility, enabling them to extend this power towards the North.

Needless to say the Sicilian proletariat would pay the price for this solution to the country's problems, in the same way as up until now they have paid in sweat

and blood for the development of the North, as well as supplied cheap labour to the German and Swiss economies. This situation cannot be discarded as irrelevant to revolutionaries simply because when it reaches the international eye it will be masked as a nationalist struggle. The basic truth of Sicilian reality is a super-exploited proletariat whose only solution can be sought through armed struggle for workers' autonomy through a federal or collectivist system of production of exchange.

To come nearer home, two situations immediately present themselves: the first, Ireland, which tends to be left aside as being too complicated, or unconditionally supported as an anti-imperialist war. This anti-imperialism needs to be clarified. That the Irish proletariat will never run their own lives while British soldiers are occupying their land is a fact. But an internal dominator, whether Republican or otherwise, with its own army or State apparatus, would be no less an obstacle. That the seeds of revolution that have always been identified with national independence exist in Ireland is a fact, but this fact is constantly being distorted by those with an interest in using racial and religious differences to their own ends. Only through revolutionary economic and social change, through the autonomous actions of the Irish exploited as a whole, supported by the exploited of Britain and the rest of the world, will ethnic differences be redimensioned

and superstructural fantasies be destroyed. Counter-infomation must be brought out in opposition to the media which have thrived on stirring up hatred around irrational issues. The economic foundations of these irrational issues should be laid bare to the world, and economic solutions worked for through direct action to put production, distribution and defence in the hands of the people themselves.

In Scotland big business has found new roots, and the nationalist argument is proving to be effective in getting workers to sacrifice themselves for the false goal of 'building the national economy' and 'curbing inflation', through 'independence from Whitehall'. Multinational interests can thrive on smaller centralised interdependent States, rather than through the old concept of the powerful nation. At a social level, there are always personal (economic and status) interests to be gained: for example, revival of language often means the possibility of a new local elite involved in the media, education and so on.

At the same time, it is easy to understand why the exploited in deliberately underdeveloped Scotland look at the centres of British capitalism and interpret their misery through a nationalist optic. The revolutionary work of unmasking irrational nationalism should not disdain the basic struggle for identity and self-management or divert it into a passive waiting for an abstract world revolution.

Anarchists must therefore work to show up the void of national self-determination, and disrupt the corporate plans of parties, trades unions and bosses by identifying the real struggle for self-appropriation and contributing to it in a concrete way. Along the road to generalised insurrection, techniques of sabotage and defence must be in the hands of those directly involved, eliminating dependence on outside groups and their ideologies, in order for them to take over production and distribution and run their own areas on the basis of free federalism, collectivism, or both. Starting on this self-managed basis in a logic where the ‘transitional phase’ finds no place, the perspective of a wider federation of free people becomes a foreseeable reality.

All this requires study and work, both at a practical and theoretical level. We hope that this pamphlet will be a small contribution towards this end.

Jean Weir
Glasgow, June 1976

Anarchism and the National Liberation Struggle

Anarchism is internationalist, its struggle does not confine itself to one region or area in the world, but extends everywhere alongside the proletariat who are struggling for their own liberation. This requires a declaration of principles which are not abstract and vague, but concrete and well-defined. We are not interested in a universal humanism which finds origin and justification in the French bourgeois revolution of 1789. The declaration of the rights of man, a banner waved by all the democratic governments in power today, deals with an abstract man who is identified with the bourgeois ideal.

We have often argued against a certain idealist anarchism which speaks of universal revolution, acts of faith, illuminism, and in substance rejects the struggle of the proletariat and is anti-popular. This anarchism becomes an individual and mythological humanitarianism with no precise social or economic content. The whole planet comes to be seen as a biological unit and discussions end in a sterile adjournment to the determining power of the superiority of the anarchist ideal over all other ideals.

We think on the contrary that man is a historical being, who is born into and lives in a precise historical situation. This places him in certain relationships with

economic, social, linguistic and ethnic, etc., structures, with important consequences in the field of science, philosophical reflection and concrete action. The problem of nationality is born from this historical direction and cannot be eliminated from it without totally confusing the very foundation of anarchist federalism. As Bakunin wrote: "Every people, however small they are, possess their own character, their own particular way of living, speaking, feeling, thinking and working, and this character, its specific mode of existence, is precisely the basis of their nationality. It is the result of the whole of the historical life and all the conditions of that people's environment, a purely natural and spontaneous phenomenon."

The basis of anarchist federalism is the organisation of production and the distribution of goods, as opposed to the political administration of people. In fact, once the revolution is underway and production and distribution comes to be handled in a collectivist or communist way (or in various ways according to needs and possibilities), the federal structure with its natural limits would render the preceding political structure incongruous. It would be equally absurd to imagine such a wide limit as one extending over the whole of the planet. If there will be a revolution at all it will be an incomplete one, and this must materialise in space. Territorial limits will then not necessarily coincide with the political confines of the preceding State

which has been destroyed by the revolution. In this case the ethnic division would take the place of the deforming political one. The cohesive elements of the ethnic dimension are precisely those which help to identify nationality and which have been so clearly expressed by Bakunin in the passage quoted above.

Anarchists refuse the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat or the management of the proletariat by a revolutionary minority using the ex-bourgeois State. They implicitly refuse the political dimension of the existing bourgeois State from the very moment in which the revolution begins. We cannot accept the “use” of the State apparatus in a revolutionary sense, therefore the provisional limit to be given to the freely associated structures remains the ethnic one. It is in this sense that Kropotkin saw the federation of free peoples, based on the approximate and incomplete example of the mediaeval communes as a solution to the social problem.

But this argument, it must be clear, has nothing to do with separatism. The essential point of the argument we are making here is that there is no difference between exploiters, that the fact of being born in a certain place has no influence on class divisions. The enemy is he who exploits, organising production and distribution in a capitalist dimension, even if this exploiter then calls us compatriot, party comrade, or whatever other pleasing epithet. Class division is still

based on exploitation put into effect by capital with all the economic, social, cultural, religious, etc., means at its disposal, and the ethnic basis which we identified as the limits of the revolutionary federation have nothing to do with this. Unity with the internal exploiters is impossible, because no unity is possible between the class of workers and the class of exploiters.

In this sense Rocker writes: "We are anational. We demand the right of the free decision of each commune, each region, each people; precisely for this reason we reject the absurd idea of a unitarian national State. We are federalists, that is, partisans of a federation of free human groupings, which do not separate themselves one from the other, but which, on the contrary, associate with the best of intimate ties, through natural, moral and economic relations. The unity to which we aspire is a cultural unity, a unity which goes forward on the most varied foundations, based on freedom and capable of repelling every deterministic mechanism of reciprocal relations. For this reason we reject every particularism and every separatism under which is hidden certain individual interests ... for here we have an ideology where it is possible to discern the sordid interests of capitalist groups."

There remains to this day, even among anarchists when confronting the problem of nationality, a living residual of idealistic reasoning. Not without reason, the anarchist Nido wrote in 1925, "The dismembering

of a country is not considered a desirable ideal by many revolutionaries. How many Spanish comrades would approve of the historical disappearance of Spain and its reorganisation on a regional basis constituted of ethnic Castilian, Basque, Galician, and Catalan, etc. groups? Would the revolutionaries in Germany resign themselves to a dismembering similar to a libertarian type of organisation which based itself on the historical groups of Bavaria, Baden, Westphalia, Hannover, etc.? On the other hand, these comrades would quite possibly like to see a dismembering of the present British Empire, and a free and independent reorganisation of its colonies in Great Britain (Scotland, Ireland, Wales) and overseas, which would not be pleasing to the English revolutionaries! Such are men, and in this way, in the course of the last war (the 1st World War), we saw the coexistence of the concept of nationality in a historical sense, alongside the revolutionary claims of the anarchists. (Obviously referring to Kropotkin and the Manifesto of the Sixteen.)

Nido refers to a state of mind which has not changed much. Even today, either due to a persistence of the illuminist and masonic ideals within a certain part of the anarchist movement, or due to a mental laziness which turns many comrades from the most burning problems and pushes them to less troubled waters, the reactions in the face of the problem of nationality are not very different to those described by Nido.

In itself the problem would not concern us much, if it was not that it has a very precise historical outlet, and that the lack of clarity has extremely negative effects on many of the real struggles in the course of development. In substance, the problem of nationality remains at a theoretical level, while that of the struggle for national liberation is taking on increasingly in today's world, a practical relevance of great importance.

Anarchists and the National Liberation Struggle

The process of decolonization has intensified within many imperialist structures since the last war, urgently raising the problem of a socialist and internationalist interpretation of the national liberation struggle. The drama of the Palestinian people, the struggles in Ireland, the Basque countries, Africa, and Latin America, are continually posing the problem with a violence hitherto unknown.

Different economic forms within the same country determine a situation of colonisation, guaranteeing the process of centralisation. In other words, the persistence of capitalist production requires inequalities in the rate of development in order to continue. Mandel writes on this subject, "The inequality in the rate of development between different sectors and different firms is the cause of capitalist expansion. This explains how widened reproduction can continue until it reaches the exclusion of every non-capitalist means.

Surplus value is thus realised by means of an increase in the concentration of capital". Mandel also treats unequal development between the various areas of one political State. The basic principle of capitalism is that although it can assure partial equilibrium, it can never assure total equilibrium, that is to say, it is incapable of industrialising systematically and harmoniously the whole of a vast territory. In other words, regional colonisation is not a consequence of centralisation, but is on the contrary one of the preconditions of capitalist development. Naturally, economic centralisation goes with political centralisation, and any allusions to democratic centralism are merely demagogic formulae, used at certain historical moments. Even superficially examining the facts of industrial and agricultural production from the unification of Italy to the end of the 1960's, one can clearly see what tasks the State has assigned to the South: to supply capital (especially emigrants' returns, taxes, etc.), supply a cheap labour force (emigration to the North), and supply agricultural products in exchange for industrial ones on the basis of the relationship of colonial exchange.

An objection to this could be that the State discriminates in this way between two bourgeois groups: the industrialists of the North and the landowners of the South, but to understand this we must bear in mind the different possibilities of exploitation between a highly developed and an underdeveloped area. In the

South a 12-14 hour day was normal while the eight hour day had already been gained in the North. It is in this way that, thanks to the various advantages of a still mediaeval conception of society, the Southern land-owners continued to extract surplus value without much re-investment.

Thus the development of the North was guaranteed through the exploitation and enslavement of the South. The political rule of the North dictated this direction, which then took the course of capitalist production in general. Integration into the Italian capitalist system produced a disintegration of the Sicilian economy which in many aspects is of a pre-capitalist type. The law of the market obliged the most backward regions to integrate with the basic capitalist system: this is the phenomenon of colonisation, which comes about in foreign regions or nations, as well as in the internal regions of single capitalist States.

The next stage in capitalist development is the leap over the national frontier which has been weakened by the polarisation of the surrounding economies at the peaks of exchange monopolisation. Colonisation gives way to imperialism. Here is what the comrades of Front Libertaïre wrote on the question: "National liberation movements must bear this reality in mind and not stop at a pre-imperialist analysis which would lead to a regional thirdworldism. That would mean that their revolutionary struggle would

remain within the dialectic of coloniser-colonised, while ends to be attained would only be political independence, national sovereignty, regional autonomy, etc. This would be a superficial analysis, and not take account of global reality. The enemy to be defeated by the Irish, the Bretons, the Provencals, for example, is not England and France, but the whole of the bourgeoisie whether English, Breton, Provençal or American. In this way the ties which unite the regional bourgeoisie with the national and world bourgeoisie can be understood.”

In this way national liberation goes beyond simple internal decolonisation and attacks the real situation of imperialist capitalist development, putting the objective of the destruction of the political State into a revolutionary dimension.

Ethnic limits also become easily recognisable. The ethnic limit in the revolutionary process of free federations of production and distribution associations has its counterpart in the pre-revolutionary phase within a class dimension. The ethnic base of today consists of the whole of the exploited people who live in a given territory of a given nation, there being no common ethnic base between exploiter and exploited. It is logical that this class basis will be destroyed along with the destruction of the political State, where the ethnic limit will no longer coincide with the exploited living within a given territory, but with the whole of

the men and women living in that territory who have chosen to live their lives freely.

On this problem the comrades of Fronte Libertaire continue: “Ethnic culture is not that of all who are born or who live in the same territory and speak the same language. It is the culture of those who, in a given group, suffer the same exploitation. Ethnic culture is class culture, and for this reason is revolutionary culture. Even if the class consciousness of the workers corresponds to a working class in a situation of national dependence, it is nevertheless the class consciousness which will carry the struggle to its conclusion: the destruction of capitalism in its present state. The decisive struggle to be carried out must be a worldwide class struggle of exploited against exploiters, beginning from a struggle without frontiers, with precise tactics against the nearest bourgeoisie, especially if they proclaim themselves “nationalist”. This class struggle is moreover the only way of saving and stimulating the “ethnic specification” on which it would be possible to build stateless socialism.”

The anarchist programme concerning the national liberation struggle is therefore clear: it must not go towards constituting an “intermediate stage” towards the social revolution through the formation of new national States. Anarchists refuse to participate in national liberation fronts; they participate in class fronts which may or may not be involved in national

liberation struggles. The struggle must spread to establish economic, political and social structures in the liberated territories, based on federalist and libertarian organisations.

Revolutionary Marxists who, for reasons we cannot analyse here, monopolise the various situations where national liberation struggles are in course, cannot always reply with such clarity to the perspective of a radical contestation of State centralisation. Their myth of the withering away of the bourgeois State and their pretension of using it, creates an insurmountable problem.

Marxists and the National Liberation Struggle

If we can share the class analysis made by some Marxists groups such as that elaborated by a part of the E.T.A. which we published in no. 3 of *Anarchismo*, what we cannot accept is the fundamental hypothesis of the formation of a workers' State based on the dictatorship of the proletariat, more or less along the lines of the preceding political State according to the organisational capacity of the individual national liberation organisations. For example, the E.T.A. comrades are fighting for a free Basque country, but are not very interested in a free Catalonia or a free Andalusia. Here we come back to the doubts so well expressed by Nido which we quoted above. At the basis of many Marxist analyses there lurks an irrational nationalism which is

never very clear.

Going back to the Marxist classics and their polemic with Bakunin, we are able to reconstruct a kind of dialogue between the two, glancing at a similar piece of work done by the Bulgarian comrade Balkanski.

In 1948, immediately after the Slav congress where he had unsuccessfully developed the idea of a Slav federation to re-unite a free Russia and all the Slav peoples to serve as a first nucleus for a future European federation and then a greater universal federation of peoples, Bakunin took part in the insurrection of Prague. Following the Prague events, Bakunin, hunted by the police, took refuge in Berlin and established close contacts with a few Czech students with the aim of attempting an insurrection in Bohemia. At this time, (the beginning of 1849), he published *Appeal to the Slavs* which resulted in his being quite unjustly accused of pan-Slavism. Marx and Engels replied with a sour criticism in their paper *Neue Rheinischer Zeitung*. Let us now see this hypothetical dialogue as it is suggested by Balanski.

Bakunin: The Slav peoples who are enslaved under Austria, Hungary and Turkey, must reconquer their freedom and unite with Russia, free from Zsarism, in a Slav federation.

Marx-Engels: All these small, powerless and stunted

nations basically owe recognition to those who, according to historical necessity, attach them to some great empire, thereby allowing them to participate in a historical development which, had they been left to themselves would have remained quite foreign to them. Clearly such a result cannot be reached without treading upon some sensitive areas. Without violence nothing can be achieved in history.

Bakunin: We must allow in particular for the liberation of the Czechs, the Slovaks and the Moravians, and their reunification in one single entity.

Marx-Engels: The Czechs, among whom we must include the Moravians and the Slovaks, have never had a history. After Charlemagne, Bohemia was amalgamated with Germany. For a while the Czech nation emancipated themselves to form the Great Moravian Empire. Consequently, Bohemia and Moravia were definitively attached to Germany and the Slovak regions remained to Hungary. And this nonexistent 'nation' from a historical point of view is demanding independence? It is inadmissible to grant independence to the Czechs because then East Germany would seem like a small loaf gnawed away by rat.

Bakunin: The Poles, enslaved by three states, must belong to a community on an equal basis along with their present dominators: the Germans, the Austrians, the Hungarians and the Russians.

Marx-Engels: The Germans' conquest of the Slav

regions between Elba and the Warthe was a geographical and strategical necessity resulting from the divisions in the Carlovingian Empire. The reason is clear. The result cannot be questioned. This conquest was in the interest of civilisation, there can be no doubt about it.

Bakunin: The Southern Slavs, enslaved by a foreign minority, must be freed.

Marx-Engels: It is of vital necessity for the Germans and the Hungarians to cut themselves out of the Adriatic. Geographical and commercial considerations must come before anything else. It is perhaps a pity that magnificent California has recently been snatched from the inept Mexicans who do not know what to do with it? The “independence” of a few Spaniards in California and Texas might possibly suffer. “Justice” and other moral principles are perhaps denied in all that. But what can be done in the face of so many other events of this kind in universal history?

Bakunin: So long a one single persecuted nation exists, the final and complete triumph of democracy will not be possible anywhere. The oppression of a people or a single individual, is the oppression of all, and it is not possible to violate the liberty of one without violating the liberty of all.

Marx-Engels: In the pan-Slav manifesto we have found nothing but these more or less moral categories: justice, humanity, freedom, equality, fraternity, independence, which sound good, but which can do

nothing in the political and historical field. We repeat, not one Slav people—apart from the Poles the Russians and perhaps the Turkish Slavs—has a future for the simple reason that all the other Slavs lack the most elementary historical, geographical, political and industrial bases. Independence and vitality fail them. The conquerors of the various Slav nations have the advantage of energy and vitality.

Bakunin: The liberation and federation of the Slavs is only the prelude to the union of the European republics.

Marx-Engels: It is impossible to unite all peoples under a republican flag with love and universal fraternity. It is in the bloody struggle of a revolutionary war that unification will be forged.

Bakunin: Certainly, in the social revolution, the West, and especially the Latin peoples, will precede the Russians; but it will nevertheless be the Slav masses who will make the first revolutionary move and will guarantee the results.

Marx-Engels: We reply that the hatred of the Russians and the first revolutionary passion of the Germans, and now the hatred of the Czechs and the Croates are beginning to intersect. The revolution can only be saved by putting into effect a decisive terror against the Slav peoples who for their perspective of their miserable “national independence”, have sold out democracy and the revolution. Some day we shall take

bloody revenge upon the Slavs for this vile and scandalous betrayal.

There can be no doubt about these radical counterpositions. Marx and Engels remain tied to a determinist view of history which is intended to be materialist, but which is not free from certain Hegelian premises, lessening the possibility of an analytical method. Moreover, they, especially Marx, let fly on strategic evaluations which reveal an emphasis on liberal-patriotism which, if it was justifiable in 1849, was a lot less so in 1855. Nevertheless at this time, during the Crimean war, he writes: "The great peninsula south of the Sava and the Danube, this marvellous country, has the misfortune of being inhabited by a conglomeration of races and nationalities which are very different, and one cannot say which would be the best suited for progress and civilisation. Slavs, Greeks, Rumanians, Albanians, almost 12 million in all, are dominated by a million Turks. To this day one might ask if of all these races, the Turks were not the most qualified to have the hegemony which can evidently be exercised over this mixed population by one nation."

And again in 1879, in the course of the Russian-Turkish war, which today the communists call "the Bulgarian patriots' war of liberation", Marx wrote, "We definitely support the Turks, and that for two reasons. The first is that we have studied the Turkish

peasants, that is, the Turkish popular masses, and we are convinced that they are one of the most representative, hard working and morally healthy of the European peasants. The second is that the defeat of the Russians will accelerate considerably the social revolution which is rising to a period of radical transformation in the whole of Europe.”

In fact, the Marxist movements for national liberation, when ruled by a minority who eventually transform themselves into a party (a generalised situation at the present time), end up using strategical distinctions, leaving the essential problems—which in point of fact also influence strategy— in second place.

The Marxists do not, for example, go into the difference between the imperialism of large States and the nationalism of small ones, often using the term *nationalism* in both cases. This causes great confusion. The *nationalism* of the small States is often seen as ‘something which contains a positive nucleus, an internal revolt of a social character, but the detailed class distinction is usually limited to the strictly necessary, according to strategic perspectives. It is often maintained, unconsciously following in this the great maestro Trotsky, that if on the one hand the upsurge of the people and oppressed minorities is immutable, the working class vanguard must never try to accelerate this thrust, but limit themselves to following the impulses while remaining outside.’

This is what Trotsky wrote in January 1931:

The separatist trends in the Spanish revolution raise the democratic problem of the right of a nationality to self-determination. These tendencies, seen superficially, have worsened during the dictatorship. But while the separatism of the Catalan bourgeoisie is nothing but a means for them to play the Madrid government against the Catalan and Spanish people, the separatism of the workers and peasants is just the covering of a deeper revolt of a social nature. We must make a strong distinction between these two types of separatism. Nevertheless, it is precisely to distinguish the workers and peasants oppressed in their national sentiment, from the bourgeoisie that the vanguard of the proletariat must take up this question of the right of the nation to autonomy, which is the most courageous and sincere position. The workers will defend totally and without reserve, the right of the Catalans and Basques to live as independent States in the case of the majority opting for a complete separation, which does not mean to say at all that the working elite must push the Catalans and Basques on to the road of separatism. On the contrary, the economic unity of the country, with great autonomy for nationalities, would offer the workers and peasants great advantages from the economic point of view and from that of culture in general.

It is clear to see that the counterposition is the

most radical possible. Marxists and Trotskyists follow systems of reasoning which for us have nothing to do with the free decision of the exploited minorities to determine the conditions of their own freedom. It is not the case to take up the fundamental theoretical differences, but it is enough to reread Trotsky's passage to realise the theoretical ambiguities it contains, and how much space is given to a political strategy favourable to the establishment of a dictatorship by an "illuminated" minority, and how little would be done towards the "real" freedom of the exploited. The ambiguous use of the term *separatism* should be underlined, and the insistence upon irrational arguments such as those relative to the "national sentiment".

Conclusion

Many problems have been raised in this work, with the awareness that they have only been done so in part, due to their wide complexity. We began from a situation of fact: that of Sicily, and a process of dismembering capable of causing incalculable damage in the near future. We have said how this process sees, in our opinion, a union of fascists and mafia, and how the interests that these people want to protect are substantially those of the Americans. The circulation of certain stale separatist formulae has obliged us to take as clear a position as possible, and seek to single out the

essential points of anarchist internationalism in the face of the problem of the national liberation struggle. We have also given a brief panoramic sketch of a few of the interpretive defects latent in the orthodox Marxist view of the problem and a few strategic obtusities which in practice determine the not-small difficulties in which the Marxist-inspired national liberation movements find themselves. We shall now try to conclude our research with a few indications of theoretical interest.

We must thoroughly re-examine the problem of the relationship between structure and superstructure. Many comrades remain within the Marxist model and do not realise it, so much this has penetrated our current way of seeing things. The power that the Marxists now hold in our universities allows them to propose a certain analytical model to the intellectual minorities, selling it off as reality with their usual complacency. In particular, it is the conception of "means of production" which must be put to careful analysis, showing the limitations and consequences of the deterministic use of the economic factor. Today economic reality has changed and cannot fit into the Marxist typology; nevertheless they do their utmost to complicate matters by attempting to thus explain events which would otherwise be easily explicable. Interpolating more open models of reasoning, we should be able to identify relevant factors such as

precisely national and cultural or ethnic particularities. These enter into a wider process of exploitation and determine quantitative changes rendering possible exploitation itself and, in the last analysis, cause the emergence of other changes, this time of a qualitative nature. Peoples and classes, political and cultural formations, ideological movements and the concrete struggle, all undergo interpretative changes in relation to the basic model. If a mechanistic determinism is accepted, the consequences are the inevitable dictatorship of the proletariat, the passage towards a not easily understood and historically non-documentable progressive elimination of the State: on the contrary, if the interpretative model is open and indeterministic, if individual will comes to be included in a process of reciprocal influence with class consciousness, if the various sociocultural entities are analysed not only economically but also more widely (socially) the consequences would be very different: preconceived statist ideas would give way to the possibility of a horizontal libertarian construction, a federalist project of production and distribution.

Certainly all this requires not only the negation of a mechanistic materialism which, in our opinion, is the result of Marxism, but also a certain idealism which, still in our opinion, comes to infect a part of anarchism. In the same way, universalism intended as an absolute value is ahistorical and idealised, because such

illuministic postulating is nothing other than the inverted ideal of reformed Christianity. It is not possible to see clearly behind the Western hegemony how much of it was developed by the ideology of a false freedom, an ambiguous humanitarianism with a cosmopolitan basis. The myth of the white man's domination is represented in various forms as the myth of civilisation and science, and therefore as the foundation of the political hegemony of a few States over others. The masonic and illuminist ideology could bolster the Jacobinism hidden within the Leninist version of Marxism, but has nothing to do with anarchism, despite the fact that many comrades continue to amuse themselves with abstract schemes and outdated theories.

Anarchists should give all their support, concrete regarding participation, theoretical concerning analyses and study, to national liberation struggles. This should be begun from the autonomous organisation of the workers, with a clear vision of class counterpositions, that is putting the local bourgeoisie in their correct class dimension, and prepare the federalist construction of the future society which should rise from the social revolution. On this basis, which leaves no room for determinisms and idealisms of various species, any fascist instrumentalisation of the oppressed people's aspirations can easily be fought. It is necessary though that in the first place we become clear among ourselves,

looking forward and building the correct analyses for an anarchist revolutionary strategy.

Bakunin

The State is not the Fatherland; it is the abstraction, the metaphysical, mystical, political, juridical fiction of the Fatherland. The common people of all countries deeply love their fatherland; but that is a natural, real love. The patriotism of the people is not just an idea, it is a fact; but political patriotism, love of the State, is not the faithful expression of that fact: it is an expression distorted by means of a false abstraction, always for the benefit of an exploiting minority.

Fatherland and nationality are, like individuality, each a natural and social fact, physiological and historical at the same time; neither of them is a principle. Only that can be called a human principle which is universal and common to all men; and nationality separates men, therefore it is not a principle. What is a principle is the respect which everyone should have for natural facts, real or social. Nationality, like individuality, is one of those facts. Therefore we should respect it. To violate it is to commit a crime, and, to speak the language of Mazzini, it becomes a sacred principle each time it is menaced and violated. And that is why I feel myself always sincerely the patriot of all oppressed fatherlands.

The Essence of Nationality. A fatherland represents

the incontestable and sacred right of every man, of every human group, association, commune, region, and nation to live, to feel, to think, to want, and to act in its own way, and this manner of living and feeling is always the incontestable result of a long historic development.

Nationality and Universal Solidarity. There is nothing more absurd and at the same time more harmful, more deadly for the people than to uphold the fictitious principle of nationality as the ideal of all the people's aspirations. Nationality is not a universal human principle: it is a historic, local fact which, like all real and harmless facts, has the right to claim general acceptance. Every people and the smallest folk-unit has its own character, its own specific mode of existence, its own way of speaking, feeling, thinking, and acting; and it is this idiosyncrasy that constitutes the essence of nationality, which is the result of the whole historic life and the sum total of the living conditions of that people.

Every people, like every person, is involuntarily that which it is and therefore has a right to be itself. Therein consists the so-called national rights. But if a certain people or person exists in fact in a determinate form, it does not follow that it or he has a right to uphold nationality in one case and individuality in the other as specific principles, and that they have to keep on forever fussing over them.

On the contrary, the less they think of themselves

and the more they become imbued with universal human values, the more vitalised they become, the more charged with meaning nationality becomes in one instance, and individuality in the other.

The Historic Responsibility of Every Nation. The dignity of every nation, like that of every individual, should consist mainly in each accepting full responsibility for its acts, without seeking to shift it to others. Are they not very foolish, all these lamentations of a big boy complaining with tears in his eyes that someone has corrupted him, and put him on the evil path? And what is unbecoming in the case of a boy is certainly out of place in the case of a nation, whose very feeling of self-respect should preclude any attempts to shift the blame for its own mistakes upon others.

Patriotism and Universal Justice. Every one of us should rise above the narrow, petty patriotism to which one's own country is the centre of the world, and which deems itself great in so far as it makes itself feared by its neighbours. We should place human, universal justice above all national interests. And we should once and for all time abandon the false principle of nationality, invented of late by the despots of France, Russia, and Prussia for the purpose of crushing the sovereign principle of liberty. Nationality is not a principle: it is a legitimate fact, just as individuality is. Every nationality, great or small, has the incontestable right to be itself, to live according to its own nature.

This right is simply the corollary of the general principle of freedom.

Rudolf Rocker (Nationalism & Culture)

The old opinion which ascribes the creation of the nationalist state to the awakened national consciousness of the people is but a fairy tale, very serviceable to the supporters of the idea of the national state, but false, none the less. The nation is not the cause, but the result of the state. It is the state which creates the nation, not the nation the state. Indeed, from this point of view there exists between people and nation the same distinction as between society and the state.

Every social unit is a natural foundation which, on the basis of common needs and mutual agreement, is built organically from below upwards to guarantee and protect the general interest. Even when social institutions gradually ossify or become rudimentary the purpose of their origin can in most instances be clearly recognised. Every state organisation, however, is an artificial mechanism imposed on men from above by some ruler, and it never pursues any other ends but to defend and make secure the interests of privileged minorities in society.

A people is the natural result of social union, a mutual association of men brought about by a certain similarity of external conditions of living, a common language, and special characteristics due to climate and

geographic environment. In this manner arise certain common traits, alive in every member of the union, and forming a most important part of its social existence. This inner relationship can as little be artificially bred as artificially destroyed. The nation, on the other hand, is the artificial result of the struggle for political power, just as nationalism has never been anything but the political religion of the modern state. Belonging to a nation is never determined, as is belonging to a people, by profound and natural causes; it is always subject to political considerations and based on those reasons of state behind which the interests of privileged minorities always hide. -1 small group of diplomats who are simply the business representatives of privileged caste and class decide quite arbitrarily the national membership of certain men, who are not even asked for their consent, but must submit to this exercise of power because they cannot help themselves.

Peoples and groups of peoples existed long before the state put in its appearance. Today, also, they exist and develop without the assistance of the state. They are only hindered in their natural development when some external power interferes by violence with their life and forces it into patterns which it has not known before. The nation is, then, unthinkable without the state. It is welded to that for weal or woe and owes its being solely to its presence. Consequently, the essential nature of the nation will always escape us if we attempt

to separate it from the state and endow it with a life of its own which it has never possessed. A people is always a community with rather narrow boundaries. But a nation, as a rule, encompasses a whole array of different peoples and groups of peoples who have by more or less violent means been pressed into the frame of a common state. In fact, in all of Europe there is no state which does not consist of a group of different peoples who were originally of different descent and speech and were forced together into one nation solely by dynastic, economic and political interests.

ALL nationalism is reactionary in its nature, for it strives to enforce on the separate parts of the great human family a definite character according to a preconceived idea. In this respect, too, it shows the interrelationship of nationalistic ideology with the creed of every revealed religion. Nationalism creates artificial separations and partitions within that organic unity which finds its expression in the genus Man, while at the same time it strives for a fictitious unity sprung only from a wish-concept; and its advocates would like to tune all members of a definite human group to one note in order to distinguish it from other groups still more obviously. In this respect, so-called "cultural nationalism" does not differ at all from political nationalism, for whose political purposes as a rule it serves as a fig-leaf. The two cannot be spiritually separated; they merely represent two different aspects

of the same endeavour.

Cultural nationalism appears in its purest form when people are subjected to a foreign rule, and for this reason cannot pursue their own plans for political power. In this event, "national thought" prefers to busy itself with the culture-building activities of the people and tries to keep the national consciousness alive by recollections of vanished glory and past greatness. Such comparisons between a past which has already become legend and a slavish present make the people doubly sensitive to the injustice suffered; for nothing affects the spirit of man more powerfully than tradition. But if such groups of people succeed sooner or later in shaking off the foreign yoke and themselves appear as a national power, then the cultural phase of their effort steps only too definitely into the background, giving place to the sober reality of their political objectives. In the recent history of the various national organisms in Europe created after the war are found telling witnesses for this. In culture-nationalism, as a rule, two distinct sentiments merge, which really have nothing in common: for home sentiment is not patriotism, is not love of the state, not love which has its roots in the abstract idea of the nation. It needs no labored explanation to prove that the spot of land on which man has spent the years of his youth is deeply intergrown with his profoundest feeling. The impressions of childhood and early youth which are

the most permanent and have the most lasting effect upon his soul. Home is, so to speak, man's outer garment; he is most intimately aquainted with its every fold and seam. This home sentiment brings in later years some yearning after a past long buried under ruins: and it is this which enables the romantic to look so deeply within.

With so-called "national consciousness" this home sentiment has no relationship; although both are often thrown into the same pot and, after the manner of counterfeiters, given out as of the same value. In fact, true home sentiment is destroyed at its birth by "national consciousness", which always strives to regulate and force into a prescribed form every impression man receives from the inexhaustible variety of the homeland. This is the unavoidable result of those mechanical efforts at unification which are in reality only the aspirations of the nationalistic states.

The attempt to replace man's natural attachment to the home by a dutiful love of the state-a structure which owes its creation to all sorts of accidents and in which, with brutal force, elements have been welded together that have no necessary connection-is one of the most grotesque phenomena of our time. The so-called "national consciousness" is nothing but a belief propagated by considerations of political power which have replaced the religious fanaticism of past centuries and have today come to be the greatest obstacle to

cultural development. The love of home has nothing in common with the veneration of an abstract patriotic concept. Love of home knows no “will to power”; it is free from that hollow and dangerous attitude of superiority to the neighbour which is one of the strongest characteristics of every kind of nationalism. Love of home does not engage in practical politics nor does it seek in any way to support the state. It is purely an inner feeling as freely manifested as man's enjoyment of nature, of which home is a part. When thus viewed, the home feeling compares with the governmentally ordered love of the nation as does a natural growth with an artificial substitute.

Contributions to the Revolutionary Struggle Intended to Be Discussed, Corrected, and Principally Put Into Practice Without Delay

Ratgeb

Translated by Paul Sharkey

The Subsistence Society

1) Haven't you ever, just once, felt like turning up late for work or felt like slipping away from work early? In that case, you have realised that:

(a) Time spent working is time doubly lost because it is time doubly wasted...

as time which might more agreeably be spent making love, or daydreaming, on pleasure or on one's hobbies: time which one would otherwise be free to spend however one wished; as time wearing us down physically and nervously.

(b) Time spent working eats up the bulk of one's life, because it shapes one's so called free time as well, time spent sleeping, moving about, eating, or on diversions. Thus it makes itself felt in every part of the daily lives of each one of us and reduces our daily lives into a series of moments and places which have the same empty repetition, and the same growing absence of real living in common.

(c) Time spent fulfilling an obligation to work is a

Contributions to the Revolutionary Struggle

commodity. Wherever there is commodity there is, unfailingly, obligatory labour and nearly every activity comes, little by little, to resemble obligatory labour: we produce, consume, eat and sleep for an employer, or a leader, or a State, or for the system of universal commodity.

(d) The less work, the more life.

So you see...YOU are already fighting, consciously or otherwise, for a society which would guarantee each one of us the right to dispose of one's own time and space: and to build for ourselves each day the life we would choose.

2) Haven't you ever, just once, felt the desire never to work again (without having others work for you, that is?)

In that case, you have come to realise that--

(a) Even if obligatory work has as its goal only the production of useful things such as clothes, food, tools, comforts and so on...it would be every bit as oppressive, because--

the worker would still be robbed of the fruits of his labour and, subjected to the same laws governing the pursuit of profit and power, the worker would still have to spend ten times as long at work as would require an attractive organization of creativity to place one hundred times the product at everybody's disposal.

(b) In the commodity system that dominates everywhere, the aim of obligatory work is not, as they

would have us believe, to produce goods which are useful and palatable to everybody, but rather just to churn out commodities, regardless of whether they might be useful or useless pollutants. Commodities have no purpose other than to sustain the profits and power of the ruling class. Under such a system, everybody works to no end and becomes aware of this.

(c) By accumulating and replacing commodities, obligatory work merely boosts the power of bosses, bureaucrats, leaders and ideologies. So it becomes the object of the workers' disgust. Every stoppage in work is a way of becoming ourselves again and defying those who prevent us from being ourselves.

(d) Obligatory work produces only commodities. Every commodity is inseparable from the lie which it stands for. So, obligatory work churns out lies, produces a world of lying representations, a topsy-turvy world where the image takes the place of reality. In this spectacular, commodity system, obligatory work produces two important lies concerning itself:

the first lie is that work is useful and necessary and that it is in everyone's interest to do so; the second lie is the make believe story that workers are incapable of shrugging off wage slavery and work, and that they cannot build a radically new society, one based on attractive, collective creativity and universal self management.

So you see... you are already fighting, consciously

or otherwise, for a society where an end to obligatory work will be replaced by a collective creativity regulated by the wishes of each individual, and by the free distribution of the goods necessary for our everyday needs. The end of forced work means the end of the system where profit, hierarchical power and universal lies reign supreme. It signifies the end of the spectacular commodity system and opens the doors to an overall reexamination of priorities. The pursuit of money and of morsels of power will give way to the quest for a harmonisation of enthusiasms which will, at last, be released and given recognition.

3) Has it ever happened that, outside your place of work, you have felt the same distaste and weariness as you do inside the factory?

In that case, you have come to understand that--

(a) The factory is all around us. It is the morning, the train, the car, the ravaged countryside, the machine, the bosses, the chief, the house, the newspapers, the family, the trade union, the street, one's purchases, pictures, one's pay, the television, one's language, one's holidays, school, housework, boredom, prison, the hospital and the night. It is the time and space of our everyday subsistence. It is the becoming accustomed to repetitive moves and suppressed emotions, emotions sampled through the proxy of intermediary images.

(b) Every activity reduced to mere existence is obligatory work: and all obligatory work transforms

the product and the producer into objects of mere existence, into commodities themselves.

(c) Rejection of the universal factory is everywhere, since sabotage and reappropriation are everywhere among the proletariat, allowing them still to derive some morsel of pleasure from idleness, or from love-making, or socialising or chatting or eating, drinking, dreaming or preparing to revolutionise everyday life by neglecting none of the delights of being not quite totally alienated.

So you see, you are fighting, consciously or otherwise, for a society where feelings will be all, and boredom and work, nothing. Mere survival has so far prevented us from really living. We must now stand the world on its head and value those glimpses of authentic living which are fated to be covered up and distorted in the system of the commodity and the spectacle... these moments of real contentment, of boundless pleasure and passion.

4) Haven't you ever thought about using your machine to turn out some instrument for use outside the factory?

In that case you have realised that--

(a) The machine produces contrary effects according to whether it is employed for the benefit of the employer and the State or whether it is put to use by the worker for his own immediate benefit.
(b) The principle of misappropriation consists of

employing against the enemy those very techniques and weapons which he usually employs against us.

(c) The opposite of obligatory work is the creativity of the individual or group. Proletarians aspire to create their own living conditions so that they may thereby cease to be proletarians. Outside of a handful of rare revolutionary outbursts, this pentup creativity has thus far remained hidden (using the boss's machinery, doing odd jobs, experimentation, and the quest for new emotions and sensations).

(d) The passion to create seeks to be all. Implying as it does the demolition of the commodity system and the reconstruction of our everyday lives, this passion to create embraces all our passions. The misappropriation of techniques so that creativity may enjoy all their benefits for all is, consequently, the only way to have an end of work and the omnipresence of compartmentalisation (into manual/intellectual, work/recreation, theory/practice, individual/society, being/appearance).

So you see, consciously or otherwise you are already fighting for a society in which the warehouses and distribution outlets, the factories and technology itself will be the property of the striking shop floor and then of all individuals grouped in self-managing units.

5) Haven't you ever deliberately destroyed products still on the production line or already in storage? In that case you have understood that--

- (a) The struggle of the workers against commodity is the real point of departure for revolution. It brings out clearly the joy of being oneself and of enjoying everything and shows how these can only be achieved by the utter destruction of that which destroys us.
- (b) Commodity is the heart of a heartless world: it is the strength but also the weakness of hierarchical authority, the State and its bureaucracy. The personal liberty and happiness of all requires not only that we strike out against it but that we anihilate it utterly once and for all (for instance, the mere sabotaging of products will not be enough since the premature release of obsolescent products an to the market is, in the last analysis, a help to private and State capitalism as in USSR, Cuba, China... in stepping up the rate of purchase and the replenishment of ideologies; thus it improves the accumulation of commodities and the reinforcement of their representatives and of the social attitudes they thrust upon us).
- (c) To the extent that sabotage is one way of holding up work, it has the merit of saving our energies and of encouraging us to down tools.
- (d) Inadequate though it may be, the sabotaging of finished products is a healthy reaction. It speaks of the workers' distaste for commodity and says something about the role of the worker i.e. about the attitude bound up with beliefs in the necessity of work, taking pride in one's work and other claptrap thrust upon the

worker by the ruling society.

(e) Refusal of the role of the worker goes hand in hand with the rejection of work and commodity itself. There is every chance that it may explode into a rejection of all roles and all modes of behaviour which would make the individual act, not in accordance with his urges and inclinations, but in accordance with images (be they good or bad) imposed upon him, images which are part of the lie by means of which commodity expresses itself. What chance has that part of you that is still, truly you when all day long you have been playing roles like the role of the paterfamilias, husband, worker, motorist, militant, TV viewer, consumer...?

So you see, consciously or otherwise, you are already fighting for a society where compartmentalisation will disappear as work itself disappears: when the individual may at last be completely true to himself because he will no longer be churning out the commodity and its lie (that topsy turvy world where the reflected image is more important than the authentic).

6) Whilst sabotaging production, hasn't it ever occurred to you what fun it might be to sabotage the weapons of repression (such as the bureaucratic machine, the cops, the quality control people, the information services or the town planners)?

In that case, you have come to realise that--

(a) The commodity system is proficient at recuperating

partial sabotage for the advantage of the system. Sabotage confined to the sabotage of products does not destroy the commodity system, for the poor quality thereby brought about merely adds to the premature obsolescence perfected by the employers as a means of forcing the rapid and regular replacement of purchases. Furthermore, sabotage, like any act of terrorism, breathes new life into the spectacle's stock of images by offering the indispensable negative images (such as the hateful saboteur, the ghastly arsonist preying on warehouses...).

(b) What allows a product to be turned into a commodity and the insinuation of the commodity process into every aspect of social activity is obligatory work and those forces which protect and maintain it... the State, the unions, the parties, the bureaucracy, the spectacle, i.e. the whole arsenal of representatives which are in the service of the commodity system and the commodities themselves (ideologies, culture, roles, or even the prevailing vocabulary).

(c) Consequently, the destruction of commodity by means of the ending of obligatory work is inseparable from the liquidation of the State, of hierarchy, constraint, the commendation of sacrifice, and the lies and of those who organise the universal commodity system. As long as sabotage fails to direct its attacks simultaneously against the production of commodities and against those who protect it, it will remain partial and

ineffective; it becomes that terrorism which is the despair of revolution and the selfdestructive fatalism of subsistence society.

(d) Anything which cannot be turned to the advantage of revolutionaries must be destroyed through sabotage. Anything that impedes such redirection deserves to be destroyed.

So you see, consciously or otherwise, you are already fighting for a society from which the State and all manner of hierarchical power will have been eliminated, a society that will give way to self-managing assemblies that will control the forces of production as well as all wealth for free distribution which will put an end to any danger of reconstruction of the commodity system.

7) Haven't you ever felt like giving up reading the newspapers and putting your foot through the television?

In that case, you have come to appreciate that--

(a) The press, radio and television are the crassest vehicles for the lie. Not only do they push real problems (such as "How can we live better?", a question asked in concrete terms every single day) further into the background, but they also induce each private individual to identify with ready made images and to put himself, abstractly, in the shoes of a head of State or a filmstar, or a murderer or a victim... in short, they induce him to react to life as if he were someone whom

he is not. The images which rule us mark the success of that which is not ourselves, which haunts us out of ourselves; of that which transforms us into objects to be categorised, labelled and hierarchised in keeping with the usages of the general commodity system.

(b) There is a vocabulary at the disposal of hierarchical power. It is to be found not only in the information services and in advertising, in readymade ideas and habits and conditioned behaviour, but also in any expression which does not pave the way for the revolution of everyday life, every expression which fails to serve our pleasures.

(c) Every moment one works for the commodity system (i.e. most of one's time), imposes on us its representatives and images, its meanings and vocabulary. This battery of ideas, identifications and modes of behaviour dictated by the need to accumulate and to replace the commodity over and over again, makes the SPECTACLE in which everyone plays a part he really fails to live and lives falsely that which he is not. That is why roleplaying is living the lie, and mere existence a sickness without end.

(d) The spectacle (ideologies, culture, art, roles, images, representations, commoditywords) embraces all those aspects of social behaviour by means of which men enter the commodity system and, by becoming subsistence objects, (commodities) conspire against themselves, renouncing the pleasure of really living for

themselves and freely constructing their everyday lives for themselves.

(e) We subsist amid a forest of images with which we are driven to identify. We act less and less for ourselves and more and more as puppets of abstractions that direct us according to the laws of the commodity system (i.e. profit and power).

(f) Roles and ideologies may be favourable to, or hostile towards the ruling system... it makes no difference since they are part of the spectacle, part of the ruling system in either case. Only that which destroys commodity and its spectacle is revolutionary.

So you see, you have had enough of organised lies and inverted reality... enough of the dumb shows that ape real life only to impoverish it. And already, consciously or otherwise, you are fighting for a society where the right to communicate, really communicate, will belong to everyone and where each individual will have access to information on things which concern him, thanks to the free availability of technology (printshops, telecommunications) and where the elaboration of an engaging lifestyle will eradicate the need to have a role and to place greater store by appearance than by what is genuinely lived.

8) Haven't you ever had the disagreeable sensation that, aside from a few odd moments, you do not really belong to yourself and are becoming alienated from your real self?

In that case you have grasped that--

- (a) Through every one of our movements (which are mechanical and repetitive and devoid of connection with one another) time is being broken up and, morsel by morsel, is stealing us away from our own selves. It is by working, and through our being obliged to labour for the reproduction and accumulation of commodities, that such stolen moments proliferate and are amassed.
- (b) Today, ageing is nothing but the expansion of wasted time, time during which life slips away. That is why there are no longer any young or old people... only individuals with a greater or lesser liveliness about them. Our enemies are those who believe (and make believe) that universal change is impossible. The dead are those who govern us. The dead are those of us who let themselves be governed.
- (c) We labour and eat, read and sleep, consume and take our leisure, absorb our culture and receive attention, and so we live out our bleak existence, much like potted plants. We subsist despite all that urges us to really live. We survive for a totalitarian, an inhuman system (a religion of things and images) which sucks us in on almost every side and almost always in order to boost the profits and crumbling power of the bourgeois bureaucratic class.
- (d) Unless we suddenly become ourselves again, unless we are seized by the urge to live life to the full, we merely help the commodity system to survive. Instead

of being lived by proxy through intermediary images, moments of real living and boundless pleasure allied to the repudiation of whatsoever obstructs or falsifies them, are blows against the commodityspectacle system. We have only to marshall these blows in a more coherent fashion to extend, multiply and redouble their impact.

(e) Through the passionate creation of conditions favourable to the growth of our passions, we wish to destroy that which is destroying us. Revolution is the passion that licenses every other passion. Passion without revolution is only the ruination of pleasure.

So you see, you have had enough of squandering your life away amid constraints. And already you are, consciously or not, fighting for a society whose basis will no longer be the pursuit of profit, but rather the search for and harmonisation of the lust for life.

9) Haven't you ever felt the urge to burn some distribution factory (i.e. supermarket, giant store or warehouse) to the ground?

In that case, you have caught on that--

(a) The real pollution is the pollution by universal commodity intruding into every area of life. Every commodity on the supermarket shelf is a cynical hymn to the wageslave oppression of the lie which places it on sale, and of the barter system of the boss and the cop whose function it is to protect that lie.

(b) The display of commodities is part and parcel of a

bleak existence and a glorification of its impoverishment: a paean to life squandered in hours of obligatory work; the sacrifices we give our assent to so that we can purchase shit (junk food, gadgets, cars, coffins, accommodation cages, and items with built-in planned obsolescence); inhibitions; pleasure/anxieties; the derisory images offered in exchange for an absence of real life and purchased by compensation.

(c) Arson against a large store is only a terrorist act. Indeed, since the commodity is designed to be destroyed and replaced, arson does not destroy the commodity system but conspires with it with just an excess of brutality. Now it is not a question of whether commodity destroys us in destroying itself. The commodity has to be destroyed utterly if we are to build universal self management.

So you see, you have had it with settings of ennui and voyeurism. And with a world where what one sees prevents one from living and where that which prevents one from living presents itself as an abstract caricature of life. And, consciously or otherwise, you are already fighting for a society where the true eradication of commodity will be achieved through free usufruct of products created once obligatory work has ceased. Instead of the work that proscribes abundance and produces only a distorted reflection of it, we want abundance that will encourage creativity and passions.

10) Haven't you ever felt like pinching something or other from the factory or store for the simple reason that you had a hand in its production, or for the (even better) reason that you need it or want it? In that case you have come to realise that--

(a) There is no theft in repossessing one's handiwork. The only thieves are those who serve the commodity system and the henchmen of the State: bosses, bureaucrats, police, magistrates, sociologists, town planners, ideologues. It is because of our tardiness in condemning them to vanish from the scene in practical terms, that they still dare to use the law to condemn a worker who takes something from a factory or a shop for which he has a need.

(b) An industrial or agricultural product serves no purpose unless it is freely available to satisfy each individual. It is a sin against the right to enjoyment to turn it into a commodity, an element of bartar, a piece of the spectacle.

(c) What is required if an object is to be removed from the commodity process and kept from returning to that process, is obviously that it should not be resold, nor appropriated for individual use, nor exchanged for a mess of money or power, (stealing so as to play the underworld bigshot and thus to have a role is merely to reproduce the spectaclecommodity process, with or without the permission of the State).

(d) What is required if an object, or even an attitude, is

not to be absorbed into the commodity process is that that object or attitude should be deployed against the process, and turned against commodity seized in full flight (the flight which converts a product into a commodity leaps from the specific object to its abstract representation and that abstract representation in turn takes on concrete shape in a variety of conditional social posturings i.e. in roles).

(e) The complete destruction of commodity can only be encompassed through the collective seizure of industrial and agricultural goods to the advantage of universal self management, and only universal self management.

So you see, you have had your fill of submission to money and to roles as a means of earning, in exchange, the good you need for a semblance of life at least. And, consciously or otherwise, you are already fighting for a society where 'no charge' and gift are the only possible social relationships.

11) Haven't you already taken part in pilfering from a distribution factory (i.e. supermarket, large store, discount warehouse)?

In that case, you have come to understand that--

(a) Individual reappropriation of goods stolen by the State and the employer class merely feeds the commodity process, unless it becomes a collective action and leads to the total liquidation of the system (however attractive the act may be, it is not enough just

to repossess goods. One must also repossess the time and space stolen from us all).

(b) Pilfering is a normal response to commodity's provocations (i.e. the signs reading "Free offer" or "Free service", etc.). Like socalled criminal arson, it is only one manifestation of the system. Just as the commodity system allows for a certain percentage of thefts in large stores and factories, so it also allows for a certain proportion of shoplifting and its selfregulation will be calculated in the light of such foreseeable, programmable "mishaps". This fact is so selfevident that one of the representatives of the law, Judge Kinnard, the sole magistrate in the Liege criminal assizes, refused on 12 September 1973, to apply the legal penalty for the theft of display goods and made the following remarkable observations: "Theft of display goods from self service store is inevitable and, indeed, shoplifting is allowed for in the charges made by traders of this sort, where gaudy advertising and scientifically gauged and phased multiple temptations constitute, for the consumers, a provocation to buy well beyond either their needs, or their purse. Generally speaking, shoplifting does not denote in the perpetrator any mentality or attitude deserving of punishment under the legal code." That is jurisprudence indeed.

(c) If, in the course of pilfering, the individual should seize goods as if they were his private property, the commodity would reappear and the system would be

renewed (in which case, it would be better to destroy everything: we could be sure that at least 90 per cent of junk would go).

(d) In the absence of an appreciation of universal self management, pilfering is, at best, an incoherent method of distribution. It constitutes an act divorced from revolutionary conditions in which the group that creates the goods distributes them directly to its members. Thus there is the risk that, by fostering shortages and scarcity of useful products, it may sow confusion in people's minds and bring about a reversion to the mechanics of commodity distribution.

So you see, consciously or not, you are already fighting for a society where unsalaried production and free distribution of goods will be rendered possible by means of the suppression of property and the collection of producers into self-managing assemblies. In those assemblies the will of every individual can be made plain through the words of delegates under mandates that may be revoked at any time. These delegates would keep account of the amount of goods available and would match up offers to produce and create with the requests of individuals, so that, progressively and irreversibly, abundance might be achieved.

12) Is it not your intention, on the first opportunity that arises, to bawl out your boss or anyone else, who talks down to you?

In that case you have grasped the fact that--

(a) By becoming a boss, one ceases to be human. The boss is the packer and the package of commodity. Outside the commodity system, he has no use. Like the commodities, he reproduces himself and is amassed: he is to be measured in terms of his power and his position in the scale of hierarchy. He derives his power from the power which the spectacle wields, as an economic intent and social representation, over the greater bulk of everyday life.

(b) The more power is atomised and extends everywhere, the stronger it becomes and the weaker it becomes. The more bosses there are the more powerless they are. The more powerless they are and the more the bureaucratic machine operates in a vacuum, the more it imposes upon everyone the semblence of its omnipotence and the more people learn to reject servitude in all its guises.

(c) Everywhere that authority exists, there is sacrifice. And vice versa. The boss and the militant are the twin stumbling blocks of revolution, the points at which it is turned on its head and becomes the very opposite of emancipation.

(d) The terrorist act of standing bureaucrat and boss back to back and dispatching them both with the one bullet, fails to alter the structure by a single iota. It merely accelerates the renewal of leadership cadres. If one is to liquidate the State and all hierarchical organisations that (sooner or later) reproduce it, one

must obliterate the commodity system.

(e) The State is the regulator, the nerve centre and protective arsenal of commodity. It strives to balance out economic contradictions, and to politically ordain society's work into rights and duties of the citizen, and to organise the ideological barrage and the repressive mechanisms which convert each individual into a lackey of the commodity system.

(f) The degree of collusion between the State and commodity can be assessed at a glance by the speed with which the police (as well as the militias of the employers and of the unions) intervene the moment a wildcat strike breaks out.

So you see, already you are fighting for a society where there will be neither constraint nor sacrifice, where everyone will be his own master and live in such circumstances that he will never have to treat another man as his slave; in short, a classless society where the power delegated to councils will be wielded under the permanent scrutiny and through the wishes of every private individual.

13) Doesn't it give you a certain sense of pleasure to think how, some day soon, you will be able to treat like human beings those cops whom it will not have been necessary to kill on the spot?

In that case you have come to appreciate that--

(a) The cop is the guard dog of the commodity system. Where the lie of the commodity is not enough to

impose order, the ruling bureaucratic class or caste sends in the cop to impose it for them.

(b) Quite apart from the contempt which he stands for, the cop is despised as a hired killer, the lackey of every regime, a professional slave, a dealer in protection, the repressive clause in the economic and social contract which the State foists upon its citizens.

(c) Everywhere that the State is to be found, there are cops. Everywhere that cops are to be found (starting from the stewards and marshals at opposition demonstrations) there too, is the State or its ghosts.

(d) All hierarchy depends on the police.

(e) Killing cops is a pastime for would be suicides. The only way to resolve the police problem is through self defence within the general context of liquidation of all hierarchical power.

(f) Happiness is possible only when the State ceases to exist: and where the complete absence of hierarchy excludes the possibility of its reemergence.

So you see, you have had your fill of controls and constraints, and of the cop who is a living reminder that you are nothing and the State everything... and a bellyful of the system that creates the conditions for illegal crime and legalises the crimes of the magistrates who repress it. And already you are fighting for a harmonisation of passions and interests (through the elimination of the interests of the spectacle and its economy) and for the reorganisation of relations

between individuals through abundant intercourse and the free diffusion of desires.

14) Haven't you ever felt like flinging your pay packet into the face of the pay clerk?

In that case, you have realised that--

(a) The wage system reduces the individual to a bookkeeper's digit. From the capitalist point of view, a wage slave is not a man but an index of the overheads of production and a certain degree of purchasing power in terms of consumption.

(b) The wage system is as much the keystone of global exploitation as alienated labour and commodity production are the keys to the spectaclecommodity system. To improve it would be to improve the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeois bureaucratic class. One can, therefore, only do away with it entirely.

(c) Wage slavery requires that we sacrifice over eight hours of our days for eight hours of work: in return we receive a sum of money which covers only a fraction of the work done. The rest is retained by the employer for his own benefit. In its turn our wage has to be exchanged for polluted, junk products, household goods sold at ten times their real value, alienating gadgets (the car that enables us to get to work and consume, pollute, destroy the countryside, and save some empty time and kill ourselves. Not to mention the dues owing to the State, to experts, and the trade

union racketeers...

(d) Anyone who believes that wage demands can endanger private or State capitalism is mistaken: employers award to their workers only that increase which the unions need if they are to give evidence of their continuing usefulness: and the unions demand of the employers (who can, in any case put up prices) only sums that pose no threat to a system of which they are the greatest beneficiaries but one.

So you see, you have had a bellyful of living most of your life as a function of money and of being reduced to obedience to the dictates of economics, of merely existing and not having the leisure to live life to the full. Already, consciously or otherwise, you are fighting for a reallocation of useful goods which will no longer have anything to do with the pursuit of profits and which will, instead, answer people's real needs.

I5) Has it ever happened that you spat on a passing priest? Or wanted to burn down 'a church, chapel, mosque or synagogue?

If so you have come to realise that--

(a) Religion is the opium of the oppressed.

(b) All that is religious calls for sacrifices. Anything or anybody (militants, for example) that calls for sacrifices to be made, is religious.

(c) Religion is the universal model for falsehood, for the overthrow of the real for the benefit of the mythical

world which will, once it has been stripped of its sanctity, be the spectacle of everyday life.

(d) The commodity system desanctifies: it destroys the religious spirit and holds its gadgetry (the Popes, Korans, Bibles, and crucifixes) up to ridicule... but at the same time it is careful to retain religion as a lasting incitement, preferral to the apparent over the real, suffering over pleasure, spectacle over experience, submission over freedom, the ruling system over our passions. The spectacle is the new religion and culture its critical spirit.

(e) Religious symbols testify to the lasting mistrust which hierarchical regimes down through the ages have harboured towards men. Take the example of Christ alone...

Leaders in the field of marketing products of divinity, the Christian churches have bowed to the pressures of the commodity system and put on a display of contortionism which will not cease until their trademark, the chameleonic Jesus, has been discarded entirely. Son of God, son of a whore, son of the virgin, worker of miracles and maker of loaves, militant and steward, pederast and puritan accuser and accused, convict and astronaut... no role is outside the range of this amazing puppet figure. He has been a hawker of suffering, waiter dispensing favours... he has been a sansculotte and socialist, a fascist and antifascist, a stalinist and barbudo, a Reichian and anarchist. He has

marched on every side under every flag; he has been in every selfdoubt and stood at both ends of the lash, and present at most executions where he has held the hand both of the executioner and of the executioner's victim. He has his place in policestation and prison and school, brothel and barrack, department store and guerillaheld territory. He has been used as a pendant and dipstick, as a scarecrow standing guard over the resting dead and the kneeling living; he has been used as torment and short rations: and once the hawkers of the blessed foreskins have rehabilitated sin as a commercial proposition he will serve as a dildo. Poor old Mahomet and Buddha and Confucious... sad symbols of rival firms lacking in push and imagination... Jesus outbids them on every front. Jesus Christ... superdrug and superstar... all the images of the man who sold out to God, caught up in the hard sell of the Godhead. The most accomplished symbol of man as the universal commodity is the scrotum of the great father figure staked out on 3 pins and made into an amulet.

So you see, already you are fighting, consciously or otherwise, for a society in which the organisation of suffering will have vanished together with its compensations and where each individual being his own master, the notion of God will have no meaning. And above all, a society where the problems of genuine experience and of passions in need of satisfaction will at last take precedence over the problems of proxy

living and of passions which have to be repressed.

16) Aren't you dismayed by the systematic destruction of the countryside and urban green spaces?

In that case, you have understood that--

(a) Town planning is the seizure of territory by the commodity system and its police.

(b) The poverty of the spectacle's decor is the decor of universal poverty.

(c) Town planner = sociologist = ideologue = cop.

(d) As far as the ruling system is concerned, there is no longer any such thing as countryside or nature or streets where one can stroll... only square metres from which profit can be extracted; and a surplus value of prestige through the retention of a pattern of green spaces, trees or rocks; expulsions and hierarchical reassembly of populations; police patrols of popular districts; and a habitat programmed to condition people to boredom and passivity.

(e) The authorities do not even bother any longer to disguise the fact that the management of territory is primarily and directly thought out with a view to a future civil war: roads are strengthened lest tanks might need to use them; recently built towers and highrise buildings carry cameras which enable the police in their H.Q. to keep a 24 hour watch on the streets: in modern apartment blocks, "shooting rooms" are planned for the use of elite police marksmen.

(f) The way in which the ruling system construes

everything turns everything into commodity. Ideology is the artificial eyes of the authorities, enabling it to see life in what is already dead, what has already been turned into a commodity.

So you see, you are already fighting, consciously or otherwise, for a society in which your wish to escape the clutches of the town planners and of ideology will be realised through freedom to organise according to your preference, the space and time of your everyday life and to build your own homes and the nomads, should you wish, and to make your towns places of passion and play.

17) Have you ever felt the urge to make love (not as a matter of routine but with great passion) to your partner or to the first man or woman to come along, or to your daughter, or your parents, or your men and women friends, or your brothers and sisters?

In that case, you have realised that:

(a) We must dispense with all the necessities placed on love, whether they be taboos, conventions, ownership, constraint, jealousy, libertinage, rape and all the forms of barter which (and this is true of Scandinavianism as of prostitution) turn the art of love into a relationship between things.

(b) You have had a bellyful of pleasure mingled with pain: enough of love experienced in an incomplete, deformed or less than genuine way; enough of intercourse by proxy or through intermediary images:

enough of melancholy fornication; of meagre orgasms; of antiseptic relationships; of passions choked and suppressed and beginning to waste the energy which they would release in a society which favoured their harmonisation.

(c) Whether we admit it or not, we are all looking for great passion which is at once single and plural. Socially we want to create the historical conditions for a lasting passionate relationship, for a pleasure the only boundary on which is the exhaustion of possibilities, for a game where pleasure and displeasure rediscover their positive side (for instance in the inception and in the ending of a free amorous liaison).

(d) Love is inseparable from individual realisation, and from communication between individuals (opportunities for meetings) and from genuine and enthusiastic participation in a shared plan. It is inseparable from the struggle for universal self management.

(e) There is no pleasure that does not reveal its meaning in the revolutionary struggle: and by the same token, the revolution's only object is to experience all pleasures to their fullest and freest extent.

So you see, consciously or otherwise, you are already fighting for a society where optimum chances will be made socially available in order to encourage free changeable associations, between people attracted by the same activities or the same delights: where attractions rooted in a taste for variety and enthusiasm

and play will take just as much account of agreement as disagreement and divergence.

18) Haven't you ever felt sick to your stomach each time prevailing circumstances force you to assume a role?

In that case you have realised that--

(a) The only complete delight lies in being what one is, in realising oneself as a person with desires and passions. Against this, social relationships, organised like the spectacle of everyday life, force each of us to conform to a series of appearances and unauthentic modes of behaviour: they urge us to identify with images, with roles.

(b) Roles are the counterfeit experience of misery which compensates for the real experience of misery. Roles (the roles of leader, or subordinate, of paterfamilias or materfamilias, or good or rebellious child, of oppositionist or conformist, or ideologue, or seducer, or VIP, or theorist, or activist, or cultured pedant, etc.) all obey the law of accumulation and reproduction of images within the spectacular organisation of commodity. And at the same time, they disguise and underpin the real impotence of individuals in terms of their ability to effect any real changes in their everyday lives, to make them passionate or to live as a fabric of interwoven passions.

(c) Rejection of roles comes through rejection of prevailing conditions. (It is as well to remember that a

role can also be a shield, such as the role of the good workers, disguising sabotage and pilfering activities.)

(d) It is not a question of changing roles but rather of doing away with the system which obliges one to play at something one has no wish to play at. The revolutionary struggle is the struggle for a life to be authentically lived.

So you see, consciously or otherwise, you are already fighting for the right to authenticity and for an end to the dissembling and the lies thrust upon us... a fight for the right to affirm the individuality of each and every person without being judged or condemned, but instead allowing the individual to give his desires and passions free rein, no matter how singular these may be. You are fighting for a society where truth will be the practice of every moment.

19) Don't you feel an instinctive mistrust of everything intellectual and of everything that inclines towards intellectualisation?

In that case you have realised that:

(a) Along with the manual, the intellectual function is the result of the social division of labour. The intellectual function is the faculty of a master; the manual that of a slave. Both are equally to be viewed with misgivings and we shall abolish both by abolishing the division of labour and class society.

(b) In the struggle of the revolutionary bourgeoisie against the feudal class and the religious spirit, culture

has been a weapon of partial liberation, a weapon of demystification. When the bourgeoisie became, in turn, the ruling class, culture for a while retained its revolutionary form. Intellectuals like Fourier, Marx and Bakunin drew from the demands of the proletarians as expressed in strikes and riots, a radical theory which, if only the workers had absorbed and put it into practice, would rapidly have done away with the bourgeoisie.

(c) Instead, the specialised thinkers of the proletariat (workerist intellectuals and intellectual workers) by playing at tribunes, politicians or guides of the working class, have transformed that radical theory into ideology, i.e. falsehood, into ideas in the masters' service. Socialism and the variants of Jacobinism (such as Blanquism or Bolshevism) have been the movement that proclaims the dictatorship of the bureaucrats over the proletariat, as happens with every so-called workers' party or the trade unions or leftist organisations.

(d) Intellectuals are the reserve army of the bureaucracy, whether they be workerist intellectuals or intellectual workers.

(e) Culture today is the form of intellectual integration into the spectacle, the label of quality that helps all commodities to sell... the initiation into the upside down world of commodity. Under cover of the pretext that it is necessary to acquire learning, culture recuperates the need for practical knowhow and turns

it into separated scholarship. It imposes an abstract surplus value of learning, a compensation for the emptiness of bleak daily existence, and the promotion within the bureaucracy, of experts. Because this scholarship is deliberately useless, it always ends up serving the system of the commodityspectacle.

(f) In particular, so-called economic scholarship is a bureaucratic/bourgeois mystification and nothing more. It only has meaning within a capitalist organisation of the economy, and how! Once capitalism is abolished, the average worker is better equipped to organise the new production than even the most learned of economists. (Without even venturing beyond reformism, the LIP workers have proven that they were capable of running their factory and dispensing with managers.)

(g) The rejection of intellectualisation is meaningless unless it is part of a struggle to terminate the division of labour, hierarchy, and the State.

(h) Workerist intellectuals are bastards and skunks. As intellectuals they agree (shamefacedly or otherwise) to hold on to a leadership role. Acting out this role and glorifying the role of the worker, they perpetuate the deception of roles and the lot of the slave, a lot of which every single worker has had his fill. In choosing so they are absurd and counterrevolutionary (for the summons to sacrifice is always counterrevolutionary).

(i) Workers who are proud of that fact are servile

bastards. Intellectualist workers are as skunklike as any wouldbe leader, relying upon the servile natures of “good workers”.

(j) Henceforth the clearest and simplest form of the radical theory thrown up by the proletariat's struggle for emancipation is the property of those who are most capable of implementing it, i.e. revolutionary workers, or all the proletarians who strive for the end of the proletariat and an end to class society. It is the property of all who do battle for the sake of universal self management, for a society which has neither masters nor slaves.

So you see, already you are fighting for a society organised in such a way that all compartmentations disappear, and so that diversity may grow through union in the revolutionary endeavour, and so that all the expertise penned up in the prison of culture can be restored to the practice whereby our everyday existence is enriched. So that knowledge may be everywhere that pleasure is: that passion and reason may be indissociable: that taken to its logical extremes, the elimination of the division of labour may truly weave the conditions for a harmonious society.

20) And don't you feel the same mistrust of those who engage in politics and those who, whilst not engaging in politics themselves, have others do so on their behalf?

In that case, you have grasped the fact that--

- (a) Traditionally, politicians are regarded as the clowns of the ideological spectacle. This allows one to mistrust them whilst persisting in voting for them. Nobody ever quite escapes them for no one ever quite escapes the spectacular organisations of the old world.
- (b) Politics is always *raison d'état*. To do away with it, one must do away with the spectacular commodity system and its protective organ... the State.
- (c) There is no such thing as revolutionary parliamentarism, just as there is not, and never has been any such thing as a revolutionary State. The only difference between parliamentary regimes and dictatorial ones lies in the magnitude of the Lie and the truthfulness of the terror.
- (d) Like every ideology, and every compartmentalised activity, politics recuperates radical demands only to whittle them down and turn them into their opposites. For instance, the determination to wreak some change in life becomes, once placed in the hands of the parties and unions, a simple wage demand, a demand for more leisure and other cosmetic changes to bleak subsistence which merely aggravate the disease by making it momentarily a little more comfortable.
- (e) The great political ideologies (nationalism, socialism, communism) have seen their charms fade in proportion as the social behaviour imposed by the imperialism of commodity has multiplied “pocket ideologies”. In turn, the morsels of ideology (notions about pollution,

art, comfort, education, abortion) are politicised in crude amalgamations leaning towards the right or left. All of this is only a ploy by which the individual can be diverted from the only concern he really has at heart i.e. changing his daily existence in the sense of enriching it and infecting it with passionate adventures.

(f) Most of the time, everybody who sets out to fight on his own behalf winds up fighting against himself. Political action is one of the chief causes of this inversion of intentions. Only the struggle for the self management of all in every area of our lives provides any real answer to the real wishes of each individual. That is why that struggle is neither a political nor an apolitical one, but an all-embracing social one.

So you see, you are already fighting, consciously or otherwise, for a society where decision making powers are universal, where divergences between individuals and groups are thrashed out in such a way that they do not result in mutual destruction but instead complement one another to the advantage of all. There is a need for the element of play that is walled up and swallowed up by politics, to be released into an interplay of relationships between individuals and affinity groups, through the balance and harmonisation of points of agreement and of difference.

21) Haven't you long since torn up your union membership card? If the answer is 'yes', you have caught on that=--

- (a) It is wrong, this belief that you have been let down by the unions. The unions constitute an organisation separate from the workers... and of necessity that organisation turns into a bureaucratic authority that works against the workers whilst pretending to defend them.
- (b) Created for the defence of the immediate interests of an overexploited proletariat, the unions have (with the development of capitalism) become the appointed courtiers of the labour force. Their aim is not to abolish the wages system, but rather to improve it. Thus, they are the finest servants of the capitalism which, in its private or in its State form, holds sway over the entire globe.
- (c) The anarchist notion of a “revolutionary syndicate” is already a bureaucratic recuperation of the direct power which the workers can wield directly by coming together in council assemblies. Spawned by a repudiation of the political in the name of the social, it falls into the traps of compartmentalisation and leaders (even should certain of the leaders be unwilling to behave as such).
- (d) The unions are a parastatist bureaucracy which complements and rounds off the power which the bourgeoisie as a class wields over the proletariat.

So you see, already you are fighting, in every wildcat strike, for a direct affirmation of the power of all against any representative arrangement that would

betoken compartmentalisation. We no longer want any union delegates: what we want are assemblies, where the decisions are made by everyone and applied for the benefit of all. Instead of bandying words about whether or not to resume work, we wish to pronounce upon the uses to which we are going to put our factories and ourselves. We want to translate our wishes into facts by choosing a council, every one of whose members will be subject to recall at any moment, and who would be charged with implementing the decisions made by the assembly.

22) Haven't you had enough of your wife or husband or your parents, children, household chores and family obligations? In that case you have realised that--

(a) The family is the tiniest theatre of social oppression, a school for lies, an apprenticeship to role playing, a conditioning of submission, and the ways of suppression, the systematic destruction of childhood creativity... the family is the natural setting for crassness, and resentment and the rebellion of the marionette.

(b) Family authority has continuously been swindling and been facing challenge in proportion as the commodity system undermines the power of men to the benefit of oppressive mechanisms in which men of power are mere cops. Thus the commodity system retains the family but drains it of its ancient and almost humane connotations: as a result the family only becomes the more unbearable.

- (c) It is within the family that all the humiliation of having been treated as objects in our subsistence society entitles one to humiliate and reduce to the standing of mere objects those who are members of one's family.
- (d) The emancipation of women cannot be dissociated from that of children or that of men. And the abolition of the family goes hand in hand with the abolition of the spectaclecommodity system. Every demand which seeks to compartmentalise (women's lib., children's lib., the revolutionary gay action front) is nothing but reformism and merely prolongs oppression.
- (e) Commodity imperialism, which destroys the traditional family, turns the family into a theatre of passivity and submission to the system (and of the contestation of it that provides the meat for mere squabbling over details).

So you see, you are already fighting, consciously or otherwise, for a society wherein everyone will have free control of himself and be independent of everyone without being subject to an oppressive system and where problems will be with harmonising everyone's desires. A society whose number one concern will be for the elimination of household drudgery and which will leave the education of children to volunteers, beginning with the children themselves.

23) Haven't you often had the feeling that this is a topsy turvy world where people do the opposite of

what they wish, pass the time away in selfdestruction and venerate that which destroys them, obedient to abstractions and sacrificing their real lives to those abstractions.

In that case you have realised that--

(a) Alienated labour underlies every other form of alienation. It lies at the historic origins of the division of society into masters and slaves, and of all the compartmentalisation that has flowed from it (religion, culture, economy, politics) and of everything that stands for destruction with a human face.

(b) It is the product, social relationships, images and representations created by the producers, (in circumstances that are such that these are dispossessed and such that one finds them turning against themselves) that mask their hostility and inhumanity behind images contrary to the reality. (The master proclaiming himself the retainer of his slaves; the exploiters of the proletariat boasting that they serve the people; the images of experience palmed off as the only genuine reality, and so on).

(c) The increasingly remarkable and unbearable gulf between the daily miseries of mere existence (and the lying representations we are offered), and the ambition we all share to live a real life, to live really, demonstrates more clearly each day that the battle has begun between the side of survival and decomposition and the side of life and excess. The final struggle for the

classless society, today historically inevitable, is drilling the proletariat who have had enough of their slavery and who are demanding self management for each and every one, against the commodity system and its servants, bourgeoisie and bureaucracy, both under the same protective helmet of the State..

(d) The quest for happiness is the quest for authentic and undistorted experience life without inversion and without sacrifice. Acceptance of one's real self, of oneself as a specific individual, is an advance which supposes that the commodity system has been abolished and the passions of individuals harmoniously reconciled.

So you see, we have had a bellyful of an existence dominated by the very opposite of this striving after happiness: an existence dominated by separate compartments (economy, politics, culture and every aspect of the spectacle) which absorb all our energies and prevent us from really living. We struggle for the overthrow of a topsy-turvy world, for the fruition of our wishes and heartfelt desires through social relationship in which the lust for profit and the imperatives of hierarchical power have no place.

24) Don't you find it odious and absurd to make any distinction between immigrant and homeborn workers?

In that case you have realised that--

(a) The old adage about "proletarians having no home

land” remains perfectly true and should be borne in mind constantly to ward off all the shit of nationalism and racism.

(b) Similarly, it should at all times be remembered that the emancipation of the proletariat is a historic and international endeavour. Only the action of revolutionary workers of the whole world will in fact create an international of self-managing councils.

(c) The ruling class and its retainers do their utmost to impose a distinction between immigrant workers and nativeborn workers. They delude the latter (whom they disdain as mere objects from which productivity can be squeezed) that there are those even more disdained than themselves.

(d) The involvement of immigrant workers in the hardest struggles is also a blow against their own bourgeoisie which sells them. in the finest tradition of the slavetraders. In this respect also, immigrant workers along with other revolutionary workers constitute the basis of a genuine international of wholesale self management.

So you see, you are already fighting, consciously or otherwise, for a society where differences (be they of race, sex, age, character, interests or desires) no longer constitute a barrier but rather help to harmonise for the sake of the greater pleasure and happiness of all. You are struggling for the realisation of self management of the individual or group, on an international basis...

dispensing with the idiotic prejudices of nationalism, regionalism or geographic attachments.

25) Don't you feel the need to talk to someone who understands you and works to the same end as yourself (rejecting work, and controls, and commodity and rejecting the truthfulness of the lies that go to make up the spectacle?

In that case you have realised that--

(a) The custom of talking for the sake of talking, and of getting absorbed by false problems, and of listening to people who say one thing but do another, and of letting oneself be caught up in the usage of repetitive, everyday nonsense, is of itself, a way of preventing the individual from recognising as his true interests, his enthusiasms and his lust for real life against the lusts for private possession as invented by commerce.

(b) Every intervention which fails to usher in practical measures is just empty talk, just a way of dulling the senses. Every practical measure that does not lead to the improvement of everyone's life merely reinforces the oppression thereof. Nothing can really improve one's life unless it destroys the commodity system.

(c) Each assemblage must rapidly arrive at a decision or be sabotaged.

(d) Before or during strikes, the discussions must take place aimed at practical truths... the propagation of an awareness of the battle to be fought... and the arrival at definite decisions concerning the action to be taken.

(e) Whatever remains only words quickly becomes ideology i.e. falsehood, like everything that is said by members of bureaucratic apparatus (parties, unions, groups specialising in the improvement of the worker livestock).

(f) The finest precaution the strike assemblies could take against the false language of the ruling system, would be to proceed without delay to the election of a council of delegates whose sole commissions would be to follow the directions of the strikers, upon pain of instant dismissal and to translate those directions into practical measures without delay.

(g) We no longer want fine speakers, nor orators showing off their rhetoric. Instead we want the language of deeds, specific proposals and properly elaborated plans of action of our own making. It is about time that our search for perfection should be directed not only into our words, but also into our deeds.

So you see, already you are struggling, consciously or not, for a society where words will no longer be used to dissemble but rather to give real extension to our desires, and will be the faithful spokesmen of our needs and desires.

THE A B C OF REVOLUTION

- A) The object of sabotage and misappropriation, whether practised by the individual or the group, is the unleashing of a wildcat strike.
- B) Every wildcat strike must develop into a factory occupation.
- C) Every factory occupied must be appropriated and turned promptly to the service of revolutionaries.
- D) By choosing delegates (who are subject to instant recall and mandated to collate decisions and to oversee their implementation) the assembled strikers lay the groundwork for a radical reorganisation of society... into a society of universal selfmanagement.

The instant the factory is occupied

- 1) Every assemblage of strikers should become an assemblage for universal self management.

All this requires is...

- a) the election of delegates subject to recall at any moment and mandated to oversee the prompt implementation of the assembly's decisions.
- b) that the assembly have provision for its self defence.
- c) that it should spread until it embraces all revolutionaries and that it should spread geographically in a search for optimum efficiency of misappropriation (i.e. to those regions possessed of both agricultural resources and primary industries).

2) All power is vested in the assembly in that it stands

for the power which every individual seeks to wield over his own everyday existence.

3) The best guarantee against any other (and, of necessity) oppressive power (i.e. parties, unions, hierarchical organisations, groups of intellectuals or of activists... all of them embryonic states) is the prompt construction of radically new living conditions.

4) The only way of dissolving the State is for federations of delegates meeting as councils to render it inoperative. Only coordination of the struggles aimed at universal selfmanagement can eradicate the commodity system.

5) Every discussion, every intervention must culminate in a practical proposition. A measure, once approved by the assembly, instantly becomes writ. The prompt organisation of self defence...

6) The right of self defence is the first right of an assembly for universal self management. It consists of arming the masses, securing and increasing the conquered territory, by means of creating the conditions for all to have a better life.

7) The revolution does not work out a plan, nor does it improvise: but it does anticipate and make preparations.

This being so, it is vital that the assemblies have to hand the following information, above all else...

a) In supply areas: the whereabouts of warehouses, depots, supermarkets and distribution outlets. The location of factories regarded as being of primary

necessity and which can be automated as soon as practicable; the location of plants which are considered convertible and transformable; the location of sectors believed parasitical and to be eliminated. Redistribution of farming areas.

b) In enemy territory: the location of barracks, police stations, arsenals etc. The home addresses and itineraries of those leaders whose neutralisation would result in the disorganisation of the statist forces.

c) In communication and liaison zones: the whereabouts of truck, bus, train or aircraft depots, plus garages and petroleum depots...The location of telecommunications centres: local radio stations, printworks, telex outlets, offset facilities, etc.

d) In the areas of basic necessities: water, electricity, hospital and clinic facilities, gasworks...

8) The instant any area is occupied by revolutionaries it must be appropriated forthwith according to two incontestable principles: selfdefense and free distribution of goods produced.

9) The best way to avoid isolation is to attack. Thus one must--

a) With an eye to the internationalist direction, create other nuclei for occupations and appropriations.

b) Strengthen and protect liaison between revolutionary zones.

c) Isolate the enemy and destroy his communications and use commando tactics to harass his rearguard and

avoid encirclement by splitting up his forces.

d) Disorganise the counterrevolution by rendering its principle leaders and best strategists harmless.

e) Make use of printing works, local radio stations and telecommunications to propagate the truth concerning the movement for universal self management and to explain what we want and what our capabilities are. Act in such a way that the masses in each district, town or village are kept up to date with what is going on elsewhere in the country. Coordinate street fighting and the struggles in the towns and in the countryside.

10) We should steer clear of outmoded, passive and static tactics, such as the use of barricades, mass demonstrations and student style struggles. It is of the utmost importance that we invent and experiment with new and unexpected tactics.

11) The success of urban guerrilla tactis employed as a tactical back-up for occupied factories depends upon the speed and effectiveness of such raids. Hence the importance of small commando teams linking up what statists of every colour already refer to as the “neighbourhood hooligans”, with “factory hooligans”.

12) Our aim is to thwart all violence against the movement for universal self management and not to spread that movement by force of arms. It is more important that we should disarm the enemy rather than liquidate him physically. The more resolute and swift our action, the less blood will be spilled.

- 13) The defection of some of those who would be initially hostile, into the camp of universal self management is the touchstone which will enable us to reckon the success of the first measures we adopt and of their advantages to all.
- 14) Nevertheless, one must take into account those conditioned by hierarchy whom the habits of slavery and self-disgust, deep-rooted suppression and the taste for sacrifice push to their own destruction and to that of all the advances in the realm of actual freedom. It is for that reason that it is a good idea if, from the outset of the insurrection, internal enemies (trade union chiefs, party men, workerists, scabs) and external enemies (bosses, managers, cops, soldiers) can be neutralised.
- 15) In the event of the insurrection becoming isolated or losing its impetus, self defence requires that we analyse different forms of possible withdrawal. These will vary according to the intensity of the struggle in which we are engaged, the nature of the mistakes made (e.g. the internal disorganisation of the movement), the violence employed by the enemy, and the anticipated degree of repression, etc.
- 16) We need not fear failure: instead we should feel out what is and is not possible, so that we can anticipate, avert and fend off repression. “There is nothing of the revolutionary in an individual who has yet to shrug off the bondage of intellectualism and, in objective terms,

veers towards the counter-revolution... someone who will accept the proletarian revolution only if it can be achieved with ease and without conflict and can be assured instantly of the backing of the proletariat world-wide and can eliminate in advance any eventuality of defeat."

17) The men who carried out the massacres against the Paris Commune and the Commune of Budapest have taught us that the repression is always ruthless and that the peace of graveyard is the only promise that is ever honoured by the forces of the Statist order of things. When the confrontation reaches the stage where the repression will spare no one, let us not spare any of these cowards who merely await our defeat as their opportunity to play the executioner. We must put their residential areas to the torch, eliminate hostages and ruin the economy so that not a trace remains of that which has prevented us from becoming all is left remaining.

18) Cherishing no illusions about that which awaits us in the event of defeat and determined, once our victory has been assured, to wreak no vengeance on former enemies, we stand ready to deploy all forms of dissuasion whilst the struggle persists... especially to destroy machinery, reserves and hostages with the aim of compelling the statist forces to retreat and disarm. Should the struggle be at a less drastic pitch, it will be to sever water, gas, electricity and fuel supply lines to

bourgeois districts where the leaders reside and to dump rubbish there instead and sabotage the lifts at their residential tower blocks, etc.

19) The voice of the masses is not easily heard above the din of battle. The ingenuity of each individual will wreak new and effective weapons for the use of the self-defence commandos. As rapidly as possible, pilfering will give way to the reconversion of whatever machinery may be available within our factories, in keeping with a rapid armament programme laid down by the universal self-managing assemblies.

20) Among weapons suitable for immediate deployment one might predict rocket-launchers made out of tubing (as tried out in Venezuela in the 1960s), ground-to-air missiles (tried out by young scientists' clubs), grenade launchers and catapults for molotov cocktails, flame-throwers, mortars, ultrasonic equipment, lasers... A study will also be made of various methods of armour plating, converted trucks and bulldozers, as well as bulletproof vests, gas masks (products that will counteract the effects of incapacitating weapons). Also of the possibility of dosing the enemy's water supply with LSD... etc.

21) Research into anti-helicopter weapons: improvements to flak guns; surface to air rockets and cannons with remote control; also lasers, marksmen and stakes preventing landings.

22) We must prepare for defence against armour by

means of anti-tank silos, remote-controlled rockets, bazookas, napalm jets and mines...

23) We must hold the roofs and cellars and dig tunnels to connect one building with another so as to facilitate the rapid and safe deployment of our self-defence commandos.

24) We must have recourse to deception and remote-controlled weapons with a view to minimising our exposure to danger.

Hastening the passage from subsistence conditions to living conditions

25) We shall carry the day for sure if we can make significant for everyone the changeover from subsistence to life meaningful for everyone. This does not mean that we are going to beat the commodity system in our first engagement. It means only that the earliest measures adopted and implemented by the self-managing assemblies must render every reversion to former circumstances doubly impossible... by doing away with the old conditions and creating such advantages that no one will consent to being dispossessed of them.

26) The primary benefits of the system of generalised self management will of necessity have the following results--

a) The system of trade and wage slavery will be replaced by the free distribution of goods which are necessary to the lives of every one of us.

b) Obligatory labour will give way to the passing of productive forces under the direct control of the self-managing assemblies and by the unfettered blossoming of individual and collective creativity.

c) An end to boredom and suppression and constraints... replaced by organisation of sympathetic social conditions and an autonomy which would empower each individual to explore himself with the assistance of all, through recognition, emancipation, multiplication, and harmonisation of interests which have hitherto been stunted or sacrificed or bottled up or distorted and, all too often, diverted into destructiveness.

All so that under the column of the good, history may note, once and for all, the final annihilation of the commodity system and with it, on a more positive note, the construction of a society that is radically new... albeit carried by each of us in his heart, already.

27) From the very outset our endeavour must be to prevent any backsliding, and to burn behind us the bridges of the old world, by helping to eliminate banks, prisons, asylums, courts, police stations, administrative buildings, barracks, churches and oppressive symbols. Not forgetting dossiers, files, identity papers, hire purchase agreements and payments records, tax forms, financiers' paper-mills and the like. Gold reserves can be disposed of through the use of *acqua regia* (a mixture of nitric acid and hydrochloric acid).

28) As soon as possible, we must destroy the structures

of the commodity system rather than persons, and we must liquidate only those who hope to drag us back to a system of exploitation, servitude, spectacle and boredom.

29) The end of commodity will usher in the era of GIFT in every form. Thus the assemblies for generalised self management will see to the organisation of production and to the distribution of priority goods. They will keep tally of offers to create and produce on the one hand and of the requirements of individuals on the other. Records kept scrupulously up to date will enable every person to have an insight into available stocks, the number and allocation of orders and the whereabouts and movements of the productive forces.

30) Factories will be reconverted and automated, or, in the case of parasitic sectors, destroyed. Almost, everywhere, small workshops for free creative labour will be at the disposal of everyone who wants to use them.

31) Parasitic buildings (offices, schools, barracks, churches...) will, on the decision of the self-managing assemblies, generally be destroyed or, should they prefer, turned into collective granaries or warehouses or temporary dwellings or playgrounds...

32) Supermarkets and department stores will be turned into outlets for free distribution and a study will be made in each area into the convenience of stepping up

the number of small distribution outlets (for which purpose small shops and stores may well be adapted).

33) Needs change the moment the dictatorship of the commodity is ended, for that dictatorship has never ceased misrepresenting our needs. Thus, motor vehicles become largely useless once space and time are available to all and once it is possible to move about freely to no time-table. So we must not only plan for the appearance of radically new demands and personal fantasies and unlooked for enthusiasms, but also gear everything towards the satisfaction of the same so that the only thing preventing their realisation is the momentary shortage of material means and not the social organisation.

34) The plan to abolish the distinction between town and country requires decentralisation of the habitat (the right to be nomadic, the right to build one's house on available sites), the destruction of pollution, pollutant industries and the creation within towns of areas of tilth and stockraising. (e.g. in the Champs Elysees).

35) The launching of the revolt will be the signal to all to withhold their talents from obligatory labour. That tiny spark of passion which enabled us to bear the harsh alienation of the trade we plied for the sake of mere subsistence, will forge newer and free vocations for us. So that anyone with a love of teaching will give his lessons in the streets: anyone enamoured with

cooking will have access to “communal” kitchens everywhere, each one competing with the other in the quality of his cooking. Thus will every creative disposition give rise to free craftsmanship and a proliferation of artefacts.

36) Each individual will have the right to make known his criticisms and demands, his opinions and creations, desires, analyses, fantasies and problems... so that the widest possible variety can spark off the best chances of encounters, agreements and harmonisation. Printing presses, telex facilities, offset facilities, radios and televisions taken over by the assemblies will be placed at the disposal of every individual to this very end.

37) No one will fight without reservation unless he first has learned how to live without time hanging heavily on his hands.

Every strike must become a wildcat strike

38) The true meaning of any strike lies in its rejection of alienated labour and of the commodity which it produces and which produces it.

39) A strike only realises this real meaning by becoming a wildcat, i.e. by jettisoning everything that impedes the autonomy of the revolutionary workers... such as parties, unions, bosses, leaders, bureaucrats, would-be bureaucrats, scabs, workers with the minds of cops and workers with the mentality of slaves.

40) Any pretext is valid grounds on which to unleash a wildcat strike for there is nothing that can justify the

brutalisation of obligatory labour and the inhumanity of the commodity system.

41) Revolutionary workers have no need of agitators. Such workers alone provide the impetus for the movement of general agitation.

42) In a wildcat strike, the strikers must exercise absolute power, to the exclusion of any other.

43) The only way of keeping outside organisations (all of them seeking to recuperate) at bay is to invest all power in the assembly of the strikers and to proceed to elect delegates charged with the coordination and implementation of the assembly's decisions.

44) No matter how limited it might be, a wildcat strike must pull out all the stops to win as much support as possible, e.g. by affording glimpses of free distribution. A strike by supermarket check-out assistants would permit both display and stored goods to be distributed free of charge. Workers might distribute goods they themselves have manufactured, or goods from their stores.

Every wildcat strike should blossom into a factory occupation. Every factory occupation should blossom into the prompt readaptation of the factory.

45) Occupation of the factory speaks of the determination on the part of revolutionary workers that they should be masters of the space and time hitherto taken up by the commodity. Unless they readapt the factory to their advantage they might just

as well kiss goodbye to the creativity they seek, and to their most inalienable rights.

46) A factory which is occupied but not readapted makes a contribution to the spectacle which alleges that no one has the power to break the commodity system, in that it puts forward the argument, (the decisive argument) which alleges that bureaucracy and ideological manipulators are always necessary. But for anyone to lose sight of the wealth of technical possibilities available to us today is to render laughable that person's charges of utopianism.

47) A factory, once occupied, should instantly be readapted to serve the interests of self defence (manufacture of arms and armour) and of the distribution, free of charge, of any useful items which might be manufactured there.

48) To break out of their isolation, revolutionaries have only their own creativity to rely upon. It is especially important that...

a) Provision be made for ways in which tactical support may be lent by other workers outside the factories. For instance, printers might interfere with the papers on which they work in order to ensure that precise and correct information is printed and that the programme of the striking workers reaches the public. High school pupils might seize control of their schools and set up liaisons with the rest of the country and attack the forces of (dis) order: the inhabitants of a given region

might neutralise the forces of repression and join with the striking workers in forming widespread and self-managing assemblies; soldiers might seize their barracks and take their officers hostage and hand them over to the strikers... In time of revolution, there is no function that cannot be destroyed through subversion.

- b) The conflict be internationalised and that the wildcat strike spread from division to division of the same industrial complex albeit geographically scattered, and between connected or complementary firms in one country and another, and between a factory and its source of raw materials. Not merely does the readaption of an economically viable region make a mockery of frontiers, but it furnishes the basis upon which can be built, not just a political international, but instead an international of revolutionary practice.
- c) The guerrilla warfare of self defence be made as coherent as is possible. Commando raids should be mounted against barracks, arms dumps and radio stations only to support and to expand the revolutionary workers' movement and not separately as is the case with terrorism, Blanquism or leftist activism: and should it prove useful, the attentat should be used selectively (against counter-revolutionary leaders with a view to rendering them harmless, or against police centres with a view to neutralising them) and never indiscriminately (e.g. bombing of railway stations, banks or public places).

49) Over living hostages such as bosses, ministers, bishops, bankers, generals, highly-placed officials, prefects, police chiefs, etc. preference should be given to material hostages such as stocks, prototypes, gold and silver reserves, expensive machinery, electronic equipment, blast furnaces, etc.

50) We must know how to tailor our means of pressurising and dissuasion to the nature of our demands. For instance, it is absurd to threaten, as the workers of the Slee company in Liege did (in September 1973) to blow up the plant unless they were given an interview with their members of parliament. Recourse to extreme measures should lead to radical measures (e.g. to the liquidation of the Statist enemy, or the disarming of the faces of repression, or to the evacuation of a town or entire region by the cops and the armed forces).

51) Risks are to be avoided except for worthwhile results. If isolation threatens, better to evacuate with an eye to the future endeavours, thereby avoiding the repression and turning each tactical withdrawal to the advantage of the revolutionaries.

52) Provision should be made for the destruction of buildings and hostages in the event of a threat of repression. Whatever cannot be readapted for the advantage of all may be destroyed: in the event of our succeeding, we can always rebuild - in the event of our being defeated we shall hasten the ruination of the

commodity system.

53) Once and for all we must renounce mass demonstrations and student-style confrontations (with the use of cobblestones, sticks and barricades). In order to protect the commodity, the cops will not hesitate to open fire. Strike commandos should very quickly achieve the disarmament and neutralisation of the statists.

54) We must never, at any time, place any trust in the statists nor agree to any truce. Instead we must spread our movement as quickly as we are able and never lose sight of the ferocity of the bourgeois and the bureaucrats in their repressions.

Prior to the wave of wildcat strikes. The practice of sabotage and readaptation by individuals is effective whenever it culminates in the unleashing of a wildcat strike.

55) Every worker is fully entitled to adapt for his benefit the products and techniques hitherto employed to his disadvantage.

56) Every worker is fully entitled to sabotage everything which serves to destroy him.

57) Sabotage and adaption are the most widespread spontaneous gestures within the workers' ranks. A proper awareness of this should be propagated and the usefulness of the phenomena stressed so that it can be multiplied, perfected and given a fuller coherence.

58) In 1972, a report submitted by officials of the

Commissariat for the protection of the State and the respecting of the constitution and by security chiefs in industry, in West Germany listed the following acts of economic sabotage:

- In a tyre factory, the solutions employed in their manufacture were, by various means and on various occasions interfered with.
- In a steelworks, the men shut off gas delivery valves, causing the blast furnace to cool down and hence, loss of production amounting to several million marks.
- A firm manufacturing television tubes received several returned products and realised that the glass had been stained by the addition of chemicals.
- A cellar housing machinery of high value was flooded when a water conduit was cut through.
- Persons unknown stole some perforated cards from a depot run by computers thereby holding up all work for a four day period.

Such examples, made public through a German magazine, give some idea of the inventiveness of the individual when he applies himself to sabotage.

59) Sabotage enthuses one more than hobbies, gardening or bridge. With diligent preparation, there is every likelihood that it will bring us to a point where we can unleash a wildcat strike, factory occupation, reconversion of the factory for the benefit of all, and so it affords each of us a little more control over our own lives each day. A tradition of long standing among

workers, it allows us to let off some steam by wreaking some petty vengeance as well as securing us a little rest whilst we wait for repairs to be done. Hitherto, it has only rarely gone beyond the level of dabbling. Everybody is aware that...

- It takes only a hammer or an iron bar to destroy a computer, a prototype, precision instruments, time-clocks, and the robots which control and ordain the pace of production.
- A heat source held close to the sensor plate will trigger the sprinkler systems in the ceilings of department stores and storage areas.
- A sprinkling of iron fillings in the carburettor, or sugar in the petrol tank or ammonium sulphate in the gearbox will put the car of a cop, boss, scab or trade union chief out of commission.
- Distribution of the telephone numbers of statists and of their car licence numbers can serve as an aid to dissuasion and demoralisation. But we really must try to move beyond the stage of mere dabbling. 60) The more complicated the commodity system becomes, the simpler the means that suffice to destroy it.
- 61) Terrorism is the recuperation of sabotage, its ideology and its separated image. Useful though it may be to destroy the cash registers of a supermarket the moment a wildcat strike is begun, or to give the cash they contain to the strikers, or to organise wildcat distribution of products and to explain what generalised

self management would be like, this would all be pointless unless linked with the operation of readapting the machinery.

62) The positive contribution of sabotage is that, being so used to knowing better than their bosses the errors made in the course of production in the pursuit of profit, the workers are equally capable of aggravating these errors or of correcting them once it becomes a matter of turning the machinery to their own advantage. The Lip experiment (recuperated from the beginning because of its failure to make a radical break with the commodity system) has at least underlined the evidence that the workers alone are equipped to wreak a definite change in the world. (The Lip workers have demonstrated the extent to which they have not succeeded in going far enough. Handicapped by the parasitic nature of their industry, they acted partly for the best in running their factory for themselves, seizing stocks and organising a wildcat pay arrangement. But, in retaining union leaders, and reducing their movement to a simple advocacy of the "right to work", and allowing the worst enemies of the revolution to applaud the spectacle of their strike, they surrendered their autonomy and denied the movement any chance of expansion, and ushered in no real historic change.). In the current state of the forces of production, we are capable of anything and nothing may lastingly resist our becoming fully aware of that fact.

63) Subject to every sort of alienation, the workers have this advantage over the rest of the proletariat... that they have in their hands the source of every alienation thrust upon them i.e. the commodity process. Because the only power they have is the power to destroy utterly that which destroys them, they also hold the key to the global solution of the problems of harmonisation, and readaptation of the economy to the organisation of new human relations with their roots in gratuitousness.

64) Sabotage is par excellence anti-work, anti-militancy and anti-sacrifice. Each of us can pave the way for it by the simultaneous pursuit of his own enjoyment and the interests of all, a calculated risk, a case of execution, a favourable opening. It accustoms one to autonomy and creativity and lays a real basis for the relations which revolutionaries aspire to establish between themselves. It is the subversion-play on which bureaucratic recuperation founders. Here is a description of what happened in 1968 in a car plant near Detroit.

“...Acts of organised sabotage began to be noticed in certain sections of the plant. At first there were faults in assembly or even parts left out, but on a much larger scale than usual, so much so that numerous motors were rejected upon first inspection. Organisation of this action brought various agreements between inspectors and some assembly workshops with mixed

feelings and motives among the workers concerned - certain of them were determined, others were merely out for some sort of revenge, still others took part only for the hell of it. Be that as it may, the movement spread rapidly amid an atmosphere of high enthusiasm...

If, in the course of inspection or trials, a motor appeared which had apparently come down the line without any manufacturing defects, a simple twist of a monkey-wrench on the oil filter or valve cover or distributor was all that it took to set that straight. Sometimes motors were rejected simply because they failed to turn over quietly enough...

Schemes devised during countless meetings led eventually to sabotage on the scale of the V-8 engine works as a whole... As six cylinder jobs the V-8s were assembled in a faulty manner or damaged during production so that they would be rejected. In addition, during trials, the inspectors agreed with one another to reject something like 3 out of every 4 or 5 motors under examination...

Without the shop floor ever having admitted to their sabotage the manager was driven to embark upon a circuitous argument to attempt to explain (something which even he found it hard to accept) that the 'lads' should not be rejecting engines which were quite evidently defective. Of course although he might hint at this, he could at no time state it openly. All such efforts were in vain, for the 'lads' simply ignored him.

Unfailingly they argued back that their interest and the company's were identical and thus that they had a duty to ensure that only products of the finest quality left their plant...

During that summer a sabotage rota was organised throughout the entire plant as a means of securing increased free time for the workers. At meetings, workers would number themselves off from 1 to 50 or beyond. Similar meetings were held elsewhere in the plant. Each worker was allocated a certain period of time, say 20 minutes or so in duration, over the following two weeks. When his turn came he would do something to sabotage production in his workshop... and that would be, if at all possible, something serious enough to bring his entire line grinding to a halt. The moment management sent in a team of workmen to repair that 'breakdown', the whole process would be repeated at some other key point in the plant. In this way the entire plant was out of action for between 5 and 20 minutes per hour for a fair number of weeks, either because of a hold-up on one line or because of an absence of engines on the line. Even the techniques of sabotage that were utilised were very numerous and varied widely, and I have no idea which ones were used in most of the workshops...

The remarkable thing about all of this is the level of cooperation and organisation among the workers inside a single workshop and also between workers in

different workshops. Whilst a response to the need for coordinated action, this organization was also a means of pursuing the sabotage, taking up collections or even of organisation of games and competitions which served to turn the working day into a period of enjoyment. This is what happened in the workshop where the engines came for testing:

The inspectors on the engine tests bench decided upon a competition centring upon the valves: this competition required that lookouts be posted at the entrances to their workshop and also that an understanding be reached with the workers on the engine assembly line to the effect that a certain number of engines chosen at random would not have their valves soundly attached. Whenever an inspector heard dubious vibrations, he would call out to everyone to clear the workshop whereupon the workers would abandon their work in order to shelter behind the crates and shelving. Next, the inspector would rev. the engine up to 4 or 5,000 revs. per minute. The engine would make all sorts of noises and eventually, after much clanking, would stop; and with one loud, sharp, cracking noise, the adjustable valve holding the gearbox would hurtle at great speed from one end of the workshop to the other. This was the signal for the rest of the workers to emerge from their shelters, cheering all the while. The inspector in question would then have another point chalked up to his score on the wall.

This competition continued for several months, and involved the explosion of more than 150 engines. Betting was all the rage.

In another instance, it all began with two workmen who hosed each other down one hot day with the hoses employed by the test work-shop. This developed into a running battle with hosed water for weapons and it persisted throughout the entire workshop for several days. Most of the engines were ignored or simply given a brusque seal of approval so that people would be free to engage in the water-fight. In many cases the engines were destroyed or damaged so that the men would quickly be rid of them. All in all some 10 to 15 water jets were engaged in the battle, each one with a pressure force comparable to that of a fireman's jet. Water jetted everywhere as then men laughed and shouted and ran in every direction. Given this atmosphere there were very few in any mood to get down to their work. Their workshop was regularly awash to ceiling level and all of the men were absolutely saturated. In no time at all, they were bringing in water pistols and garden hoses and pails and the escapades assumed the scale of one huge carnival during working hours. One fellow strolled around wearing his wife's shower cap, to the huge amusement of the rest of the plant's workers who were unaware of what was going on in the test workshop..." (from the pamphlet Lordstown 72 published by 4 millions de Jeunes

Travailleurs, Paris, See Also Solidarity Pamphlet/45).

65) The problem of organization is an abstract one unless it answers the question... "who organised and why?" At best, those organisation set up without the workers have resulted in practical impotence and, on most occasions,in the renewal of bureaucratic apparatus. Organisation set up in the name of the workers have, at best, created the conditions for bureaucratization and, most times, have become instruments of para-statist oppression. The only form of genuinely workers' and revolutionary organisation is the assemblage of wildcat strikers evolving into an assembly for general self management, as described earlier. This is ushered in, not by other, necessarily hybrid and separate organizations, but by the revolutionary action which requires only intervention groups coming together for a precise operation and dissolving once that specific activity no longer has need of their existence.

66) Ephemeral groups formed as necessary by and for the exploration of the effects of a specific action, will see to it that the autonomy of the individual is respected, obedience repudiated and all sacrifice excluded. The only discipline will be the discipline that will be adopted after discussion and regulated by the requirements of the under-taking and of protection against any chance of repression.

67) Every revolutionary is entitled to act alone, in commandos or in ephemeral groups, but he should

take care lest he act separately i.e. lose sight of the tactical line which leads from acts of sabotage and adaption to the wildcat strike, and from the wildcat strike to collective occupation and adaptation of factories. Our revolution is a total, indivisible revolution. This means, for instance, that sabotage is not confined to action against work, but is applicable to every facet of commodity, dispensing with authoritarian attitudes, taboos (such as incest and sexual repression), self-centred conduct (jealousy, avarice) and the lies of representation, etc... in such a way that everywhere freedom is encouraged along with strengthening of passions, harmonization of desires and personal wishes... 68) Only self-defence groups, formed for the purpose of encompassing a specific action and dissolving once it has been encompassed and once the protection of all has been assured, can prepare the way in any coherent fashion for the emergence of conditions favourable to the establishment of assemblies of general self management.

69) The workers who are against work, parties, unions, commodity, sacrifice and hierarchy will form circumstantial self-defence groups. The “factory hooligans” as they are known to the statist front (from fascists to Maoists) represent the basis of a movement in whose absence the “neighbourhood hooligans” lapse into terrorism, and from which the assemblies of generalised self management will necessarily emerge.

70) The finest way in which to ensure the safety of a group engaging in sabotage or adaptation activities is to unleash a collective upsurge of revolutionary enthusiasm in the breasts of the workers and the population generally. And the best anonymity is to enjoy the fellowship of as many people as possible.

71) The absence of hierarchically arrived-at decisions cuts down the risks of police manipulation and bureaucratic machination. None-the-less, every ephemeral group with a brief has an interest in:

- a) setting itself up among people who know its members well;
- b) taking account of the capacities and weaknesses of each individual, and attuning them to the action;
- c) anticipating the failure of their plan through treachery or inadequacy, and preparing a variety of possible ripostes, taking care to avert any widespread repression (e.g. by taking hostages and by giving consideration to the extermination of probable exterminators and their accomplices, etc.) and by learning the lessons from their failures and, in practical terms, by turning each and every defeat into a defeat for the statists.

72) As a general rule, subversive activities initiated by a guerrilla group against the ruling system, should fulfil at least these 4 conditions:

- a) They should give free rein to individual creativity and autonomy whilst giving a sharper edge to the

empathies and antagonisms between the participants.

- b) They should examine probable forms of repression and the method by which a response can be made for the benefit of the greatest possible number.
- c) The struggle should be carried into every single facet of everyday life, which is the true yardstick of the progress or shortcomings of a long revolution.
- d) It should always have an eye to the real pleasures and quality of life for all the workers of a factory, or an entire district or for the entire proletariat.

73) The degree of success can be measured by the speed with which the progression is made from sabotage and individual adaptations to the wildcat strike and to collective adaptation... this being the only act that furthers the movement towards generalized self management.

74) The basic unit of generalized self management is not the individual but the revolutionary individual who acknowledges obedience only to a circumstantial commitment to a specific purpose and to his own pleasure as the universal guide, and who pays homage to no organisational fetishism.

75) One does not improvise an act of sabotage or adaptation, be it by individual or group. Instead, one prepares for it as if it were a harrying action. One has to calculate the opportune moment, the relative strength of factors engaged on both sides, the lay-out of the land, possible defections and mistakes and

everything that might contribute towards their correction, as well as the possibilities of withdrawal and the risks involved therein. One ought also to link one's action to an overall strategy, the central concern of which ought at all times to be the construction of a system of generalized self management.

76) It is a good idea to circulate plans and details of factories, telecommunications centres, etc... so that access plans, the methods by which these are to be sabotaged, and details as to how they operate are made available to a number of people who can then bring their powers of ingenuity to bear upon these questions.

77) It is good if documents such as we have just described can be discussed and criticised and amended, though not in any abstract fashion. Only practice can bring any real criticism to bear upon the revolutionary plan.

78) Similarly, the best way to eliminate ideologies and their armies of bureaucrats, is to struggle with the greatest possible consistency and as much precision as can be mustered for the goal of generalised self-management. The moment that wildcat strikes open up the possibility of forming self-management assemblages with elected, mandated, and revocable delegates, and the moment that the free distribution of goods becomes the system... the ideologies shall see criticism in arms line up against their statist and bureaucratic aspirations denounce once and for all the

lies behind which they are masked.

79) The theoretical axiom according to which "... the right to live life to the full can be achieved only through the utter destruction of the commodity-spectacle system," must now assume a consistency in practice stretching from the overall strategic conception to the tiniest details of the tactical struggle. This is why it is not without its uses that every individual should draft and circulate his recommendations in the game of subversion (for instance, it is possible to dislodge any enemy from his premises simply by tossing in... together... a bottle of bleaching water - say, sodium hypochlorite--and a flagon of sink or toilet cleaner (sodium hydrate based)... and remember that one hour prior to an expected tear-gas attack, one should absorb anti-histimine tablets (rumicin)... etc. etc.). And one would do well to mistrust the phoney information supplied by the cops themselves.

80) The struggle for the utter destruction of commodity is indivisible from the day-by-day elaboration of a full life freed of taboo and constraints. Of necessity, every revolutionary aspiration depends upon the quest for personal amelioration and upon a calculated gamble pitting risk against pleasure (minimum risk, maximum pleasure).

The Struggle Against Fascism Begins with the Struggle Against Bolshevism

Otto Rühle

Introductory Note

Now that the tragic history of fascism has run the full course of its formal development, culminating in the modern democratic State, Rühle's article becomes more readily comprehensible to us. It was written at the end of the thirties and dedicated to the contemporaneous struggle against both bolshevism and fascism. The real dominion of present day capitalism shows the authoritarian designs that have provided the platform for contemporary fascism (camouflaged by democracy), and those of contemporary bolshevism (camouflaged by the dictatorship of the proletariat) to be quite similar.

To be more explicit we can say that by shedding formal authority (where it needed the fascism of the stage sets and swastikas) for real power, the capitalist project is developing in the direction of total control. This control can be arrived at in two ways which, however, lead to the same point: a) the democratic one, based on an exterior decentralisation of decision making, reconstituting power in a centralisation of control, such as comes about in the so-called western

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democracies; b) the State capitalist one, based upon giving exploitation an ideological cover and direct control by the communist party, such as comes about in all the so-called communist countries to one degree or another.

If we evaluate both roads and consider what remains to be done for the exploiters to achieve their aim, we should say that it is precisely the western democracies that are the more advanced of the two along the road of total control, and not the totalitarian 'communist' regimes. In fact, in having chosen the quickest road to total control (that of ideology and complete control of the State apparatus) the latter have chosen the least stable and at the same time the most dangerous (for them) road. These regimes are sitting on a huge potential explosion of rebellion, not only of a specific marginalised minority (as is the case with the western democracies), but concerning the great mass of the exploited. On the other hand, the western democracies—not so much through their own merit but through the mechanism of capitalist competition—have found themselves faced with the need to have recourse to more subtle means of dominion and can therefore realise more carefully and intelligently the type of control that characterises real fascism today.

It would be sufficient to examine the different concepts of repression we have seen indicated in the State models mentioned above, to realise how much

the fascism of the countries of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” have to learn from the fascism of the countries of western democracy. In the first, repression strikes not only dissidents as such, but also wide strata of workers and peasants who for various reasons do not accept or simply show no signs of accepting, the domination of the party apparatus. The concentration camps are structured to hold not a criminalised minority of dissidents but vast strata of the population, when not entire communities. In the West, the special prisons—for example in Italy—select a criminalised minority who, through the mechanism of consensus, are extorted from the great mass of exploited and, detached from the social body, are seen to be ‘different’. The modern fascism of western democracy has this characteristic: it sets itself up as a power structure that wants to make everyone ‘participate’ and which wants to exclude no one, but only on condition that control remains in the hands of a restricted minority capable of coordinating all the centres of economic power with the centres of political power, in the view that a total development of control will make economy and politics tally perfectly. The fascism of the ‘communist’ States clearly presents itself as backward, less intelligent, in that the massive use of ideology to condition relationships might lead one to think differently. Basically, however, the strictly spectacular phase of domination (the huge pictures of Lenin, Mao, etc., absolutely unthinkable in western

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terms) no matter how sophisticated they are, always represent a red form of fascism (we are thinking of the China of the cultural revolution), in essence not much different from the great Nazi parades of Nuremburg, or the prancing of the other buffoon of Palazzo Venezia.

It should be said that Chinese and Russian models of fascism are now turning towards the progressive 'open' society typical of western democracies, as even the supreme heights of the party are beginning to understand the difficulties of maintaining formal dominion over the exploited masses by persisting in the use of an eternal regurgitation of spectacular ideology. Perhaps one of the major obstacles to approaching more rational forms of fascism is the politico-military division of the world into power blocks, but that does not change the fact that for example the recent 'liberation' of China consented a penetration of the American model if nothing other at that level of production and consumerism.

This brief article by Rühle therefore maintains its relevance. Written in the heat of the moment, surprisingly it perceives relations that, for the time, were extremely intricate and obscure. The struggle against fascism begins with the struggle against bolshevism. Today we repeat in the same way: the struggle against sophisticated fascism begins with the struggle against the more crude and therefore more easily comprehensible variety. In fact, going

into the fascist nature of State forms such as the so-called communist ones, we realise that the only solution is the immediate and definitive destruction of power, under whatsoever form it constitutes itself. We confirm that the anarchist model of intervention upon reality is the only one that can make the struggle against fascism proceed in the right direction.

Alfredo M. Bonanno
27 May 1981

The Struggle Against Fascism Begins with the Struggle Against Bolshevism

Russia must be placed first among the new totalitarian States. It was the first to adopt the new State principle. It went furthest in its application. It was the first to establish a constitutional dictatorship, together with the political and administrative terror system which goes with it. Adopting all the features of the total State, it thus became the model for those other countries which were forced to do away with the democratic State system and to change to dictatorial rule. Russia was the example for fascism.

No accident is involved here, nor a bad joke of

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history. Here the duplication of systems is not apparent but real. Everything points to the fact that we have to deal with expressions and consequences of identical principles applied to different levels of historical and political development. Whether party 'communists' like it or not, the fact remains that the State order and rule in Russia are indistinguishable from those in Italy and Germany. Essentially they are alike. One may speak of a red, black, or brown 'soviet State', as well as of red, black or brown fascism. Though certain ideological differences exist between these countries, ideology is never of primary importance. Ideologies, furthermore, are changeable and such changes do not necessarily reflect the character and the functions of the State apparatus. Furthermore, the fact that private property still exists in Germany and Italy is only a modification of secondary importance. The abolition of private property alone does not guarantee socialism. Private property can also be abolished within capitalism. What actually determines a socialist society is, besides the doing away with private property in the means of production, the control of the workers over the products of their labour and the end of the wage system. Both of these achievements are unfulfilled in Russia, as well as in Italy and Germany. Though some may assume that Russia is one step nearer to socialism than the other countries, it does not follow that its 'soviet State' has helped the international proletariat

come in any way nearer to its class struggle goals. On the contrary, because Russia calls itself a socialist State, it misleads and deludes the workers of the world. The thinking worker knows what fascism is and fights it, but as regards Russia, he is only too often inclined to accept the myth of its socialistic nature. This delusion hinders a complete and determined break with fascism, because it hinders the principle struggle against the reasons, preconditions, and circumstances which in Russia, as in Germany and Italy, have led to an identical State and governmental system. Thus the Russian myth turns into an ideological weapon of counterrevolution. It is not possible for men to serve two masters. Neither can a totalitarian State do such a thing. If fascism serves capitalistic and imperialistic interests, it cannot serve the needs of the workers. If, in spite of this, two apparently opposing classes favour the same State system, it is obvious that something must be wrong. One or the other class must be in error. No one should say here that the problem is one merely of form and therefore of no real significance, that, though the political forms are identical, their content may vary widely. This would be self-delusion. For the Marxist such things do not occur; for him form and content fit to each other and they cannot be divorced. Now, if the Soviet State serves as a model for fascism, it must contain structural and functional elements which are also common to fascism. To determine what they are we must go back

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to the ‘soviet system’ as established by Leninism, which is the application of the principles of bolshevism to the Russian conditions. And if an identity between bolshevism and fascism can be established, then the proletariat cannot at the same time fight fascism and defend the Russian ‘soviet system’. Instead, the struggle against fascism must begin with the struggle against bolshevism.

II.

From the beginning, bolshevism was for Lenin a purely Russian phenomenon. During the many years of his political activity, he never attempted to elevate the Bolshevik system to forms of struggles in other countries. He was a social democrat who saw in Bebel and Kautsky the genial leaders of the working class, and he ignored the left-wing of the German socialist movement struggling against these heroes of Lenin and against all the other opportunists. Ignoring them, he remained in consistent isolation surrounded by a small group of Russian emigrants, and he continued to stand under Kautsky’s sway even when the German ‘left’, under the leadership of Rosa Luxemburg, was already engaged in open struggle against Kautskyism.

Lenin was concerned only with Russia. His goal was the end of the Czarist feudal system and the conquest of the greatest amount of political influence for his social democratic party within the bourgeois society. However, it realized that it could stay in power

and drive on the process of socialization only if it could unleash the world revolution of the workers. But its own activity in this respect was quite an unhappy one. By helping to drive the German workers back into the parties, trade unions, and parliament, and by the simultaneous destruction of the German council (soviet) movement, the Bolsheviks lent a hand to the defeat of the awakening European revolution.

The Bolshevik Party, consisting of professional revolutionists on the one hand and large backward masses on the other, remained isolated. It could not develop a real soviet system within the years of civil war, intervention, economic decline, failing socialization experiments, and the improvised Red Army. Though the soviets, which were developed by the Mensheviks, did not fit into the Bolshevik scheme, it was with their help that the Bolsheviks came to power. With the stabilisation of power and the economic reconstruction process, the Bolshevik Party did not know how to coordinate the strange soviet system to their own decisions and activities. Nevertheless, socialism was also the desire of the Bolsheviks, and it needed the world proletariat for its realization.

Lenin thought it essential to win the workers of the world over to the Bolshevik methods. It was disturbing that the workers of other countries, despite the great triumph of bolshevism, showed little inclination to accept for themselves the Bolshevik

theory and practice, but tended rather in the direction of the council movement that arose in a number of countries, and especially in Germany.

This council movement Lenin could use no longer in Russia. In other European countries it showed strong tendencies to oppose the Bolshevik type of uprisings. Despite Moscow's tremendous propaganda in all countries, the so-called 'ultra-lefts', as Lenin himself pointed out, agitated more successfully for revolution on the basis of the council movement than did all the propagandists sent by the Bolshevik Party. The Communist Party, following bolshevism, remained a small, hysterical, and noisy group consisting largely of the proletarianized shreds of the bourgeoisie, whereas the council movement gained in real proletarian strength and attracted the best elements of the working class. To cope with this situation, Bolshevik propaganda had to be increased; the ultra left had to be attacked; its influence had to be destroyed in favour of bolshevism.

Since the soviet system had failed in Russia, how could the radical 'competition' dare to attempt to prove to the world that what could not be accomplished by bolshevism in Russia might very well be realized independently of bolshevism in other places? Against this competition Lenin wrote his pamphlet 'Radicalism, an Infantile Disease of Communism', dictated by fear of losing power and by indignation over the success of the heretics. At first this pamphlet appeared with

the subheading, *Attempt at a popular exposition of the Marxian strategy and tactic*, but later this too-ambitious and silly declaration was removed. It was a little too much. This aggressive, crude, and hateful papal bull was real material for any counter revolutionary. Of all programmatic declarations of bolshevism it was the most revealing of its real character. It is bolshevism unmasked. When in 1933 Hitler suppressed all socialist and communist literature in Germany, Lenin's pamphlet was allowed publication and distribution.

As regards the content of the pamphlet, we are not concerned here with what it says in relation to the Russian Revolution, the history of bolshevism, the polemic between bolshevism and other streams of the labour movement, or the circumstances allowing for the Bolshevik victory, but solely with the main points by which at the time of the discussion between Lenin and 'ultra leftism', the decisive differences between the two opponents were illustrated.

III.

The Bolshevik Party, originally the Russian social democratic section of the Second International, was built not in Russia but during the emigration. After the London split in 1903, the Bolshevik wing of the Russian social democracy was no more than a small sect. The 'masses' behind it existed only in the brain of its leader. However, this small advance guard was a strictly disciplined organization, always ready for

militant struggles and continually purged to maintain its integrity. The party was considered the war academy of professional revolutionists. Its outstanding pedagogical requirements were unconditional leader authority, rigid centralism, iron discipline, conformity, militancy, and sacrifice of personality for party interests. What Lenin actually developed was an elite of intellectuals, a centre which, when thrown into the revolution would capture leadership and assume power. There is no use to try to determine logically and abstractly if this kind of preparation for revolution is right or wrong. The problem has to be solved dialectically. Other questions also must be raised: What kind of a revolution was in preparation? What was the goal of the revolution?

Lenin's party worked within the belated bourgeois revolution in Russia to overthrow the feudal regime of Czarism. The more centralized the will of the leading party in such a revolution and the more single-minded, the more success would accompany the process of the formation of the bourgeois State and the more promising would be the position of the proletarian class within the framework of the new State. What, however, may be regarded as a happy solution of revolutionary problems in a bourgeois revolution cannot at the same time be pronounced as a solution for the proletarian revolution. The decisive structural difference between the bourgeois and the new socialist society excludes such an attitude.

According to Lenin's revolutionary method, the leaders appear as the head of the masses. Possessing the proper revolutionary schooling, they are able to understand situations and direct and command the fighting forces. They are professional revolutionists, the generals of the great civilian army. This distinction between head and body, intellectuals and masses, officers, and privates corresponds to the duality of class society, to the bourgeois social order. One class is educated to rule; the other to be ruled. It is from this old class formula that Lenin's party concept emerged. His organisation is only a replica of bourgeois reality. His revolution is objectively determined by the forces that create a social order incorporating these class relations, regardless of the subjective goals accompanying this process.

Whoever wants to have a bourgeois order will find in the divorce of leader and masses, the advance guard and working class, the right strategical preparation for revolution. The more intelligent, schooled, and superior is the leadership and the more disciplined and obedient are the masses, the more chances such a revolution will have to succeed. In aspiring to the bourgeois revolution in Russia, Lenin's party was most appropriate to his goal.

When, however, the Russian revolution changed its character, when its proletarian features came more to the fore, Lenin's tactical and strategical methods ceased to be of value. If he succeeded anyway it

was not because of his advance guard, but because of the soviet movement which had not at all been incorporated in his revolutionary plans. And when Lenin, after the successful revolution which was made by the soviets, dispensed again with this movement, all that had been proletarian in the Russian Revolution was also dispensed with. The bourgeois character of the Revolution came to the fore again, finding its natural completion in Stalinism.

Despite his great concern with Marxian dialectics, Lenin was not able to see the social historical processes in a dialectical manner. His thinking remained mechanistic, following rigid rules. For him there was only one revolutionary party—his own; only one revolution—the Russian; only one method—the Bolshevik. And what had worked in Russia would work also in Germany, France, America, China and Australia. What was correct for the bourgeois revolution in Russia would be correct also for the proletarian world revolution. The monotonous application of a once discovered formula moved in an egocentric circle undisturbed by time and circumstances, developmental degrees, cultural standards, ideas and men. In Lenin came to light with great clarity the rule of the machine age in politics; he was the ‘technician’, the ‘inventor’, of the revolution, the representative of the all-powerful will of the leader. All fundamental characteristics of fascism were in his doctrine, his strategy, his social

'planning', and his art with dealing with men. He could not see the deep revolutionary meaning of the rejection of traditional party policies by the left. He could not understand the real importance of the soviet movement for the socialist orientation of society. He never learned to know the prerequisites for the freeing of the workers. Authority, leadership, force, exerted on one side, and organization, cadres, subordination on the other—such was his line of reasoning. Discipline and dictatorship are the words that are most frequent in his writings. It is understandable, then, why he could not comprehend nor appreciate the ideas and actions of the 'ultra-left', which would not accept his strategy and which demanded what was most obvious and most necessary for the revolutionary struggle for socialism, namely that the workers take their fate into their own hands once and for all.

IV.

To take their destiny into their own hands—this keyword to all questions of socialism—was the real issue in all the polemics between the ultra-lefts and the Bolsheviks. The disagreement on the party question was paralleled by the disagreement on trade unionism. The ultra-left was of the opinion that there was no longer a place for revolutionists in trade unions; that it was rather necessary for them to develop their own organizational forms within the factories, the common working places. However, thanks to their unearned

authority, the Bolsheviks had been able even in the first weeks of the German revolution to drive the workers back into the capitalistic reactionary trade unions. To fight the ultra-lefts, to denounce them as stupid and as counterrevolutionary, Lenin in his pamphlet once more makes use of his mechanistic formulas. In his arguments against the position of the left he does not refer to German trade unions but to the trade union experiences of the Bolsheviks in Russia. It is a generally accepted fact that in their early beginnings trade unions were of great importance for the proletarian class struggle. The trade unions in Russia were young and they justified Lenin's enthusiasm. However, the situation was different in other parts of the world. Useful and progressive in their beginnings, the trade unions in the older capitalistic countries had turned into obstacles in the way of the liberation of the workers. They had turned into instruments of counter revolution, and the German left drew its conclusions from this changed situation.

Lenin himself could not help declaring that in the course of time there had developed a layer of a "strictly trade-unionist, imperialistic orientated, arrogant, vain, sterile, egotistical, petty-bourgeois, bribed, and demoralised aristocracy of labour." This guild of corruption, this gangster leadership, today rules the world trade union movement and lives on the back of the workers. It was of this trade union movement

that the ultra-left was speaking when it demanded that the workers should desert it. Lenin, however, demagogically answered by pointing to the young trade union movement in Russia which did not as yet share the character of the long established unions in other countries. Employing a specific experience at a given period and under particular circumstance, he thought it possible to draw from it conclusions of worldwide application. The revolutionist, he argued, must always be where the masses are. But in reality where are the masses? In trade union offices? At membership meetings? At the secret meetings of the leadership with the capitalistic representatives? No, the masses are in the factories, in their working places; and there it is necessary to effect their cooperation and strengthen their solidarity. The factory organization, the council system, is the real organisation of the revolution, which must replace all parties and trade unions.

In factory organizations there is no room for professional leadership, no divorce of leaders from followers, no caste distinction between intellectuals and the rank and file, no ground for egotism, competition, demoralization, corruption, sterility and philistinism. Here the workers must take their lot in their own hands.

But Lenin thought otherwise. He wanted to preserve the unions; to change them from within; to remove the social democratic officials and replace them with Bolshevik officials; to replace a bad with a good

bureaucracy. The bad one grows in a social democracy; the good one in bolshevism.

Twenty years of experience meanwhile have demonstrated the idiocy of such a concept. Following Lenin's advice, the Communists have tried all and sundry methods to reform trade unions. The result was nil. The attempt to form their own trade unions was likewise nil. The competition between social democratic and Bolshevik trade union work was a competition in corruption. The revolutionary energies of the workers were exhausted in this very process. Instead of concentrating upon the struggle against fascism, the workers were engaged in a senseless and resultless experimentation in the interest of diverse bureaucracies. The masses lost confidence in themselves and in 'their' organizations. They felt themselves cheated and betrayed. The methods of fascism, to dictate each step of the workers, to hinder the awakening of self initiative, to sabotage all beginnings of class-consciousness, to demoralise the masses through innumerable defeats and to make them impotent—all these methods had already been developed in the twenty years of work in the trade unions in accordance with Bolshevik principles. The victory of fascism was such an easy one because the labour leaders in trade unions and parties had prepared for them the human material capable of being fitted into the fascistic scheme of things.

V.

On the question of parliamentarianism, too, Lenin appears in the role of the defender of a decayed political institution which had become a hindrance for further political development and a danger to proletarian emancipation. The ultra-lefts fought parliamentarianism in all its forms. They refused to participate in elections and did not respect parliamentary decisions. Lenin, however, put much effort into parliamentary activities and attached much importance to them. The ultra-left declared parliamentarianism historically passé even as a tribune for agitation, and saw in it no more than a continuous source of political corruption for both parliamentarian and workers. It dulled the revolutionary awareness and consistency of the masses by creating illusions of legalistic reforms, and on critical occasions the parliament turned into a weapon of counter revolution. It had to be destroyed, or, where nothing else was possible, sabotaged. The parliamentary tradition, still playing a part in proletarian consciousness, was to be fought.

To achieve the opposite effect, Lenin operated with the trick of making a distinction between the historically and politically passé institutions. Certainly, he argued, parliamentarianism was historically obsolete, but this was not the case politically, and one would have to reckon with it. One would have to participate because it still played a part politically.

What an argument! Capitalism, too, is only historically and not politically obsolete. According to Lenin's logic, it is then not possible to fight capitalism in a revolutionary manner. Rather a compromise would have to be found. Opportunism, bargaining, political horse-trading,—that would be the consequence of Lenin's tactic. The monarchy, too, is only historically but not politically surpassed. According to Lenin, the workers would have no right to do away with it but would be obliged to find a compromise solution. The same story would be true as regards the church, also only historically but not politically antedated. Furthermore, the people belong in great masses to the church. As a revolutionist Lenin pointed out that one had to be where the masses are. Consistency would force him to say 'Enter the Church; it is your revolutionary duty!' Finally, there is fascism. One day, too, fascism will be historically antedated but politically still in existence. What is then to be done? To accept the fact and to make a compromise with fascism. According to Lenin's reasoning, a pact between Stalin and Hitler would only illustrate that Stalin actually is the best disciple of Lenin. And it will not at all be surprising if in the near future the Bolshevik agents will hail the pact between Moscow and Berlin as the only real revolutionary tactic.

Lenin's position on the question of parliamentarianism is only an additional illustration of his incapacity to understand the essential needs

and characteristics of the proletarian revolution. His revolution is entirely bourgeois; it is a struggle for the majority, for governmental positions, for a hold upon the law machine. He actually thought it of importance to gain as many votes as possible at election campaigns, to have a strong Bolshevik fraction in the parliaments, to help determine the form and content of legislation, to take part in political rule. He did not notice at all that today parliamentarianism is a mere bluff, an empty make-believe, and that the real power of bourgeois society rests in entirely different places; that despite all possible parliamentary defeats the bourgeoisie would still have at hand sufficient means to assert its will and interest in non-parliamentary fields. Lenin did not see the demoralising effects parliamentarianism had upon the masses, he did not notice the poisoning of public morals through parliamentary corruption. Bribed, bought, and cowed, parliamentary politicians were fearful for their income. There was a time in prefascist Germany when the reactionaries in parliament were able to pass any desired law merely by threatening to bring about the dissolution of parliament. There was nothing more terrible to the parliamentary politicians than such a threat which implied the end of their easy incomes. To avoid such an end, they would say yes to anything. And how is it today in Germany, in Russia, in Italy? The parliamentary helots are without opinions, without will, and are nothing more than

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willing servants of their fascist masters.

There can be no question that parliamentarianism is entirely degenerated and corrupt. But, why didn't the proletariat stop this deterioration of a political instrument which had once been used for their purposes? To end parliamentarianism by one heroic revolutionary act would have been far more useful and educational for the proletarian consciousness than the miserable theatre in which parliamentarianism has ended in the fascistic society. But such an attitude was entirely foreign to Lenin as it is foreign to Stalin today. Lenin was not concerned with the freedom of the workers from their mental and physical slavery; he was not bothered by the false consciousness of the masses and their human self-alienation. The whole problem to him was nothing more nor less than a problem of power. Like a bourgeois, he thought in terms of gains and losses, more or less, credit and debit; and all his businesslike computations deal only with external things: membership figures, number of votes, seats in parliaments, control positions. His materialism is a bourgeois materialism, dealing with mechanisms, not with human beings. He is not really able to think in socio-historical terms. Parliament to him is parliament; an abstract concept in a vacuum, holding equal meaning in all nations, at all times. Certainly he acknowledges that parliament passes through different stages, and he points this out in his discussions, but he does not

use his own knowledge in his theory and practice. In his pro-parliamentarian polemics he hides behind the early capitalist parliaments in the ascending stage of capitalism, in order not to run out of arguments. And if he attacks the old parliaments, it is from the vantage point of the young and long outmoded. In short, he decides that politics is the art of the possible. However, politics for the workers is the art of revolution.

VI.

It remains to deal with Lenin's position on the question of compromises. During the World War the German Social Democracy sold out to the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, much against its will, it inherited the German revolution. This was made possible to a large extent by the help of Russia, which did its share in killing off the German council movement. The power which had fallen into the lap of Social Democracy was used for nothing. The Social Democracy simply renewed its old class collaboration policy, satisfied with sharing power over the workers with the bourgeoisie in the reconstruction period of capitalism. The German radical workers countered this betrayal with the slogan, 'No compromise with the counter revolution'. Here was a concrete case, a specific situation, demanding a clear decision. Lenin, unable to recognize the real issues at stake, made from this concrete specific question a general problem. With the air of a general and the infallibility of a cardinal,

he tried to persuade the ultra-lefts that compromises with political opponents under all conditions are a revolutionary duty. If today one reads those passages in Lenin's pamphlet dealing with compromises, one is inclined to compare Lenin's remarks in 1920 with Stalin's present policy of compromises. There is not one deadly sin of Bolshevik theory which did not become Bolshevikistic reality under Lenin.

According to Lenin, the ultra-lefts should have been willing to sign the Treaty of Versailles. However, the Communist Party, still in accordance with Lenin, made a compromise and protested against the Versailles Treaty in collaboration with the Hitlerites. The 'National bolshevism' propagandized in 1919 in Germany by the left-winger Lauffenberg was in Lenin's opinion 'an absurdity crying to heaven'. But Radek and the Communist Party—again in accordance with Lenin's principle—concluded a compromise with German Nationalism, and protested against the occupation of the Ruhr basin and celebrated the national hero Schlageter. The League of Nations was, in Lenin's own words, 'a band of capitalist robbers and bandits', whom the workers could only fight to the bitter end. However, Stalin—in accordance with Lenin's tactics—made a compromise with these very same bandits, and the USSR entered the League. The concept 'folk' or 'People' is in Lenin's opinion a criminal concession to the counterrevolutionary ideology of the petty

bourgeoisie. This did not hinder the Leninists, Stalin and Dimitrov, from making a compromise with the petty bourgeoisie in order to launch the freakish Peoples Front movement. For Lenin, imperialism was the greatest enemy of the world proletariat, and against it all forces had to be mobilized. But Stalin, again in true Leninist fashion, is quite busy with cooking up an alliance with Hitler's imperialism. Is it necessary to offer more examples? Historical experience teaches that all compromises between revolution and counterrevolution can serve only the latter. They lead only to the bankruptcy of the revolutionary movement. All policy of compromise is a policy of bankruptcy. What began as a mere compromise with the German Social Democracy found its end in Hitler. What Lenin justified as a necessary compromise found its end in Stalin. In diagnosing revolutionary non-compromise as 'An Infantile Disease of Communism', Lenin was suffering from the old age disease of opportunism, of pseudo communism.

VII.

If one looks with critical eyes at the picture of bolshevism provided by Lenin's pamphlet, the following main points may be recognized as characteristics of bolshevism:

1. Bolshevism is a nationalistic doctrine. Originally and essentially conceived to solve a national problem, it was

later elevated to a theory and practice of international scope and to a general doctrine. Its nationalistic character comes to light also in its position on the struggle for national independence of suppressed nations.

2. Bolshevism is an authoritarian system. The peak of the social pyramid is the most important and determining point. Authority is realized in the all-powerful person. In the leader myth the bourgeois personality ideal celebrates its highest triumphs.

3. Organizationally, bolshevism is highly centralistic. The central committee has responsibility for all initiative, leadership, instruction, commands. As in the bourgeois State, the leading members of the organization play the role of the bourgeoisie; the sole role of the workers is to obey orders.

4. Bolshevism represents a militant power policy. Exclusively interested in political power, it is no different from the forms of rule in the traditional bourgeois sense. Even in the organization proper there is no self-determination by the members. The army serves the party as the great example of organization.

5. Bolshevism is dictatorship. Working with brute force and terroristic measures, it directs all its functions toward the suppression of all non-Bolshevik institutions and opinions. Its 'dictatorship of the proletariat' is the dictatorship of a bureaucracy or a single person.

6. Bolshevism is a mechanistic method. It aspires to

automatic coordination, technically secured conformity and the most efficient totalitarianism as a goal of social order. The centralistically ‘planned’ economy consciously confuses technical-organizational problems with socioeconomic questions.

7. The social structure of bolshevism is of a bourgeois nature. It does not abolish the wage system and refuses proletarian self-determination over the products of labour. It remains therewith fundamentally within the class frame of the bourgeois social order. Capitalism is perpetuated.

8. Bolshevism is a revolutionary element only in the frame of the bourgeois revolution. Unable to realize the soviet system, it is thereby unable to transform essentially the structure of bourgeois society and its economy. It establishes not socialism but State capitalism.

9. Bolshevism is not a bridge leading eventually into the socialist society. Without the soviet system, without the total radical revolution of men and things, it cannot fulfill the most essential of all socialistic demands, which is to end the capitalist human-self alienation. It represents the last stage of bourgeois society and not the first step towards a new society.

These nine points represent an unbridgeable opposition between bolshevism and socialism. They demonstrate with all necessary clarity the bourgeois character of the Bolshevik movement and its close

relationship to fascism. Nationalism, authoritarianism, centralism, leader dictatorship, power policies, terror-rule, mechanistic dynamics, and inability to socialize—all these essential characteristics of fascism existed in bolshevism and still do. Fascism is merely a copy of bolshevism. For this reason the struggle against the one must begin with the struggle against the other.

Workers' Autonomy

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Introduction

The growing contrast between the real workers' movement and their 'official spokesmen' (parties of the left, trades unions, etc.) is a direct consequence of the latter's failure to fulfil their professed task of freeing the workers from exploitation. Each day that passes demonstrates to whoever wants to see it that these organs have no intention of challenging the basic structure of capitalism, and are now making quite unashamed appeals to the workers to make sacrifices, accept unemployment, wage cuts, increased prices and so on, in order to save the economy for their employers. Strangely, those who seem most reluctant to see things as they are, are the conscious minority where even anarchists are still discussing whether or not we should be 'working within' the trade unions, or proposing to build alternative but essentially similar Workers' Autonomy

structures. It is to this minority that we are proposing the following articles. The subject is not new but is being experimented daily in the immense variety of trials and errors put into effect both at individual (absenteeism, sabotage, etc.) and mass (wildcat strikes, rent strikes, squatting, etc.) level by those who suffer the brunt of exploitation directly: the low paid workers, the unemployed and other emarginated minorities, those for whom autonomous organisation is not a choice among others but a necessity at the very level of survival.

This leads to the problem of the role of the anarchist minority within the workers' movement. Does the anarchist, refusing the role of leader or vanguard, have any role to play within the mass movement? This is a problem that needs going into in-depth. There seems to be some reluctance among many anarchists to do so, often leading to situations of total inertia even in the face of struggles where an anarchist presence might be of considerable significance.

The direction our work takes is conditioned from the start by our attitudes and analyses no matter how unsophisticated these may be. In recent years the libertarian movement has come to take certain assumptions for granted concerning the working class and the struggle against capitalism, which if gone into can be found to have their roots in the Marxist theories. This has led to workerist attitudes (idealisation of the

industrial worker, disdain of minorities and the so-called ‘lumpen proletariat’, and an economicistic vision of the class struggle), and sterility of ideas and action. It is not a question of theoretical purity, but the more serious problem that the means we use condition ends to be attained.

This is the main theme of the first article, where Alfredo Bonanno questions the ‘scientific’ and ‘rational’ Marxist analyses, reminding us of the great influence that Hegel had on Marx throughout his work, and the not inconsiderable ‘idealist’ element that this alimented. In the place of Marxist metaphysics we must direct our efforts to developing a pluralist analysis based on concrete factors that are constantly modifying the relationship exploitation/struggle. But as Alfredo Bonanno continues, not only must we take into account the objective causes of oppression, we must also examine the subjective factors that play an important role in the persistence of exploitation and are hindering the process of workers’ autonomy. One of the main factors is what he calls the religiosity of the masses, causing them to solicit a guide or leader. Another subjective obstacle in the path of workers’ autonomy, and therefore of social revolution, is the set of moral values inherited by the industrial workers from the bourgeoisie, which creates a division between skilled and unskilled or unemployed workers, and exalts the work ethic, guardian angel of production.

Workers’ Autonomy

In the two articles that follow, written by the comrades of Kronstadt Editions, the essential theme is the role of the anarchist minority in the autonomous struggle of the workers. If this could once be considered that of working to build syndicalist structures or workers' councils, time has demonstrated how these organisms cannot reach a truly revolutionary perspective but remain tied to a precise vision of the economy (that of a quantitative consideration of production), and their perspective as organs of counterpower. The concept of workers' autonomy bases itself on a qualitative change in human relations, not a simple change in the ownership of the means of production. This involves taking in a global vision of the struggle and not restricting it to that of the factory or the demand for more jobs, hence the concept of 'territory', covering in addition to the workplace, also the living area, the school, the land, and so on. Within this global reality every individual finds his or her dimension through direct struggle, without passing through the intermediary of party or trade union.

The ever important question is raised again: are these struggles a natural, spontaneous process, or is there a place, a need for the presence of a minority with a revolutionary consciousness to work within this movement, not as a vanguard, but in order to stimulate moments of direct action and clarification.

The comrades of Kronstadt Editions go into this problem in some depth. They consider that a distinction

should be clear between the actual mass organism (the spontaneous organisational form that grows around a specific struggle), and the specific one (that made up of anarchist comrades with the aim of stimulating such moments). There can of course be times when the two merge, but, as they point out, the distinction should be clear at the outset in order to avoid possible mystification or illusions.

Another point they raise is that autonomous struggle cannot be imposed from the outside (as it would then be autonomous in name only), but there must be a disposition within the people in a given situation to act in such a way. The work of the revolutionary minority is therefore not that of trying to form autonomous mass organisms, but rather that of measuring the potential for such to come about, and trying to increase that potential through actions that are relative to the situation. Needless to say, the phenomenon of workers' autonomy is attracting the attention of parties who feel the way the wind is blowing and have an interest in trying to insert themselves within this movement in order to instrumentalise it. This is another place where anarchists come in: to expose such attempts, and for this we must be clear ourselves, and wary of subconscious attempts to see them as a potential for the growth of some fictitious anarchist movement. The fourth article, by the autonomous movement of the Turin railway workers, the MAB, is a document

that has grown from a concrete situation, an attempt by some of the railway worker comrades in that area to organise in the form expressed in the document: in autonomous workers' nuclei, free from the interference of trade unions or parties.

Problems have been raised in this pamphlet that have found little space in anarchist publications until now. We hope that this attempt will lead to further discussion on the problem of autonomy.

Jean Weir
Catania 1976

After Marx, Autonomy

The road ahead of the proletariat is blocked: the reformist parties, trade unions and employers have coalesced to obstruct any growth in the level of the struggle, or any conquests that could lead to a revolutionary transformation of production relations. The proletariat have only one alternative: that of building communism directly, passing over the counterrevolutionary bureaucratic structures. In order to do this we must provide analyses of and realise in practice, elements organised by the base at the level of production: autonomous workers' nuclei. These nuclei must not, in our opinion, be confused with the company, the factory, etc., but their concept

must extend to a global vision of factory, living area, school and land.

Within this globality the idea of autonomy must be reinterpreted by the working class and related to the autonomy of each individual, element of constant reference and correction of any tendency to construct the former at the cost of the latter.

Here the action of a minority that has acquired a revolutionary consciousness has its place: to point out the ever present dangers of bureaucratisation, any involution towards the control of the struggle by a minority, certain corporative tendencies intrinsic to the workers' movement, and all the other limitations that centuries of oppression have developed.

Their very delicate task is therefore that of fusing together struggle and organisation, uniting them in daily praxis. This requires analytical clarity in order that the second should be maintained within the usable limits of the first, and to prevent its autonomous essence being destroyed by the organisational aspect, leaving it in name only.

Not negligible, finally, is the work of the active minority concerning the problem of gaining information, essential element for the emancipation of the working masses and their control over the elements necessary for their liberation: the demolition of all constituted power, and the communitarian management of the means of production.

If once the possibility of revolution could be confused with the simple expropriation of the means of production (on which the Marxist ambiguity rests today), we now know with certainty that the bourgeoisie themselves are prepared to transform their property titles in order that exploitation can continue under another guise. The ‘smooth’ passage to State socialism is the most widely diffused prospect among the ‘progressive’ circles of the bourgeoisie.

In the face of such a prospect the working class must build the means necessary for the struggle and the recapture of a revolutionary perspective.

Working Class Autonomy

The analytical individuation of the working ‘class’ is a complex problem. Usually comrades like to refer to even the most sophisticated of the Marxist analyses, coming through with all possible glory by affirming that they intend to limit the ‘use of Marx’ to the strictly indispensable (usually identified with the economic analyses), for the construction of the true libertarian perspective of workers’ autonomy and their struggle.

Frankly, I have never been able to do as much. Perhaps for reasons derived from my profound aversion to metaphysics, and perhaps, given the character of my studies, I have learned to detect the smell of metaphysics a long way off. And such a large part of the Marxist analyses, even in economy and historical

methodology, stinks of metaphysics. That is why, as far as is possible, I mean to avoid doing the same.

As the great founder fathers themselves have admitted, the themes of the problem of class are not their ‘invention’. They, and Marx in particular, limited themselves to relating the existence of classes to certain precise historical phases in the development of production, from which, with a considerable logical jump, they drew the conclusion of the ineluctability of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the consequent mythology of a transition to the classless society.

I have often heard Marx’s ‘realism’ praised, it being identified in his refusal to lament on the ‘immorality’ of society, and in his analysis of exploitation and the chapter of accidents of the class struggle as a necessary process leading to the liberation of society, therefore a salutary and evolutionary process. We do not see anything ‘scientific’ in all that. Marx could not follow his predecessors such as Saint-Simon, Fourier, Owen and Sismondi for two good reasons: he believed in revolution (in his own way) and had studied Hegel (whom he never digested, in spite of all his youthful criticisms). In this way he managed to found in his ‘systematic’ brain, the realism of the propagandist and political journalist and the optimism of the metaphysician who identifies rational with real.

What bewilders us most is the fact that anarchist comrades often do not realise that they are fully

subscribing to a programme that has its roots in German protestant mysticism of the Middle Ages (see Hegel and his debtors), a philosophical Middle Ages that still insists on a claimed difference between 'class in itself' and 'class for itself'. The passage is the awakening of consciousness; the point of departure the objective situation obtained by the distribution of private property. Sometimes the awakening of consciousness is made to coincide with class organisation.

Apart from the metaphysical premise, the only concrete fact here is history. For the first time, with great clarity and analytical explanation, Marx manages to free reasoning on Man from all religious, biological or evolutionary idealisation. What remains is man in history: no small feat, seriously wasted, however, by the 'rationalising' claim of enclosing it within the 'Romanesque' atmosphere of the phenomenology of the spirit (albeit it upside down). In this way the justification of the history of man emerges from the dialectical process placed within a fixed structure. History is rationalised through a metaphysical process, in the same way as it has been done by other historians with just as much need for 'a point of reference', using the dominion of religion or the evolution of the species. Once history is 'rationalised' historical reason ceases to be 'absolute reason' (as it was for example for the theoreticians of the old democracy) and becomes 'dialectical reason'. Rationality becomes a new

wrapping for an old parcel, enabling it to be sold off as new goods. But old or new, these goods are always a product of ‘Metaphysical & Co.’, supplier to all the ‘Royal Houses’ of the world.

Certainly the old ‘absolute reason’ had lost favour. To reinterpret the world with its measure would have been a very difficult and easily discreditable operation, as were the attempts of the ingenuous materialists of the first half of the nineteenth century, romantics in love with matter and its metaphysical ‘sensations’, incapable of tearing the vicissitudes of Man from their absolute periodicity: exploitation/rebellion, and again exploitation, and again rebellion. Obtusity of history on the one hand, obtusity of its interpreters on the other. This blessed spirit’s path did not want to move in a progressive direction: exploitation continued to grow again after the revolt, the workers’ blood bathed the streets with a constancy that gave some with a sense of humour the idea of predicting revolutionary cycles.

Nevertheless, in spite of such poverty of means and pollution in the few basic ideas, Marx managed to go beyond the useless production of his time, uniting optimism and realism in a remarkable reconstruction, even though they were lacking in many aspects and requiring some fundamental changes. One of the most deficient parts is precisely that concerning the problem of ‘class’. It is no coincidence that the unfinished manuscript of *Das Capital* stops precisely here.

Workers’ Autonomy

For we anarchists the problem should be quite clear. Any reasoning of the kind ‘thing in itself’ should not interest us. Who the devil ‘class in itself’ might be does not strike us as being an important problem; in fact we do not see it as a problem at all. How this ‘class in itself’ could become a ‘class for itself’ seems to us to be a joke in bad taste. Let us leave such ‘typographical jokes’ to professors of philosophy and reason more simply, sticking to the facts.

We do not know, nor do we want to know, if a class in itself actually exists. What does interest us is to know that there exists a power structure. This macroscopic fact, which goes right through history, cannot be denied. In this way history can be said to be marked by power and by the various transformations it has undergone in order to persist as such. But such reasoning would begin to smell of metaphysics in that it would lead us to the question: is it power that determines history, or something in history that determines power in one form or another? Let us put such reasoning aside. History is marked by many events that are more or less constant throughout its development: the State, religion, production, sex, and the struggles of the exploited. In fact it would be impossible to construct an historical development of any one of those elements, thereby giving us a history based on the State, religion, production, sex, the struggles of the exploited, etc..

And let it not be understood that we believe

possible a military history, a history of religion, an economic history, a sexual history, and a history of the struggles of the exploited. We know, like everyone else, that history is an indissoluble unity. We are only saying that, for the sake of argument, it would be possible to single out the above mentioned elements.

That proves, or at least it seems so to us, that it is always possible to construct an external model, whether it be dialectical (the metaphysical model), idealist (the religious model), materialist (the economic model), or descriptive (the empirical model): but that also proves that such work would be quite pointless.

For anarchists, history is all these elements put together, and many other things besides. We can also include irrational and metaphysical aspects: they too are history, and although from time to time they should be isolated and condemned, not for this can they be eliminated. If we did otherwise we should fall into two indissoluble alternatives, such as that between ideas and action, or the other way around. In practice all that does not matter to us: we can leave such work to the philosophy professors.

This places us before one last metaphysical obstacle: should we ask the meaning of reality? (This is no idle question. Marxism is due much credit for having managed to camouflage it by postponing it to infinity). Reality is at the same time power, religion, production, sex, the struggle, and many other things as

well that we do not remember or that we do not know. What matters is not interpreting it in its totality (which would be the metaphysical model of 'thing in itself') but interpreting the main elements that are useful for the construction of a programme of action.

Every attempt at analysis should have this aim. Let us take an example, starting from the model that takes into consideration the struggle of the exploited, a constantly recurring fact in history. The common lot of these struggles is to be reabsorbed by the State. This process, which has cost millions of lives and incredible suffering, has not killed the will to struggle.

We thus have two elements: the struggle, and the will to struggle. Now we must ask why this struggle has constantly had a negative outcome, and what is significant about this. The first point can be partly explained by the presence of a minority 'leading' this struggle; a minority which, if on the one hand it takes itself as being the head of the movement of the exploited, on the other adopts the role of ascending elite, that is, a minority that intends to take power itself, taking the place of the elite who were previously in charge. There is another, deeper reason for the first point: the persistent religiosity of the exploited masses, hence their need for a guide, a group or a person capable of materialising their desire for vengeance. This takes us to the second point: what significance should be given to the constant negative outcome

of these struggles? The conclusion is linked to the discourse on the autonomy of the individual. Only the will to freedom, at the same time the fruit of and the reason for the struggle, can eliminate the sentiment of religiosity that is still intrinsic in the struggles of the workers today.

This model might explain the great flood of reformist and authoritarian parties in that they become, in our opinion, the symbol of vengeance. The masses see in these organisations the sacerdotal caste and church that will lead to their millenary dream. For their part, the bureaucrats of power (the trade unions should be included in this argument) who present themselves as ascending elites, have every interest in exploiting this sentiment, while their very nature prevents them from stimulating any initiative towards a process of liberalisation.

But the sum of these struggles throughout the course of history can be seen as a progression. Certainly we must not fall prey to the progressivist illusion, but in our analysis, the acknowledgment of a certain progress is based on observable facts. For example, the reduction in working hours and improvement in working conditions are objectively progress compared to previous situations, although they can become a part of a process of recuperation, rendering the struggle just as necessary as before. What matters here is the obvious fact that this process transforms the type of religiosity in a situation

of exploitation. To the old religiosity instrumentalised by the Church, we can compare the lay religiosity instrumentalised by the political parties today. The comparison is useful and allows us to see the differences. If the identification of the class of exploited is vague and cannot be otherwise once we have deliberately left history and, as we shall see, reality in the realm of vagueness, on the other hand we now have the possibility of using various elements in our analysis that would otherwise have remained irremediably outside it in the case of an a priori choice of a precise system (for example, dialectics, religion, economics, metaphysics, etc.). If the construction of the analytical model is more difficult, the richer should be the result of its application, it neither having to work for the construction of a party, or in defense of a preestablished order.

A rough conclusion would be one linking the working class to a progressive elimination of the religious sentiment that gives rise to the need for a 'guide'. Every attempt to do 'for oneself' is for us a sign of acting in first person on the situation of exploitation. The struggle, taken in itself as the phenomenon of an amorphous mass more or less sensitised under the teachings of a church or party, is not enough to define a class. Nor is the productive process as a whole, as a precise repartition of the ownership of the means of production that excludes a part of the human race, enough to define a class.

Marxists can also speak of class ‘consciousness’; the term does not worry us. But not for this should we be drawn into their philosophical arguments on this pseudo problem. We have often said that the autonomy of the individual is determined by his or her acceptance of responsibility in making decisions concerning his or her life: this responsibilisation can also be called ‘consciousness’. It would be preferable to define it ‘will’. The will to do for oneself, the will to intervene in first person, the will to break the spellbound circle of religiosity, the will to overturn tradition, the will to break with orders from above: in a word, the will to build one’s own autonomy. And it is here that the discourse on the autonomy of the individual meets that of the autonomy of the working class.

The Active Minority

The conclusion for working class autonomy comes to us, as we have seen, from the impossibility of breaking through the counterrevolutionary circle in any other way. That this impossibility is supposed to be due to some historical process does not concern us. Workers’ autonomy is not another philosophical ‘form’ like so many others, it is an objective necessity. Workers must look after their own interests: the religious stimulus towards a delegate to take care of their interests must be fought.

Here a question arises. What determines the birth

and development of the autonomous organisation of the struggle within the working class? Is it automatic, a direct consequence of the impossibility of a revolutionary outlet due to the 'holy alliance' between capital, parties and trade unions? Or does a precise minority exist, acting within the masses, developing a progressive clarification of the dangers, obstacles and possibilities: i.e. pushing the masses to act for themselves?

The most exact answer would be an illustration of the two factors alongside each other. But in practice the most serious problem that arises is that of the precise historical character of the industrial proletariat, and their 'hegemonic' role in the revolutionary perspective. It would seem to some that without the birth of the industrial proletariat the tendency towards autonomous organisation would not have come about. We find such reasoning curious for two reasons: first, it insists on giving the industrial proletariat the historic role of 'guide', and proposes an illogical alternative in history, the possibility of a 'nonexistence' of the proletariat. But the proletariat does exist. Industry and its development have their place in history, the industrial revolution determined the birth of capitalism and this has evolved to the present day as we know it, and shows clear signs of going in a certain direction. All this leads to a simplification of our problem. A large part of the working class today is made up of the

industrial proletariat. They are directly linked in their class configuration to the development of the industrial revolution, which is logical. But we do not understand how from this we can pass to the affirmation that the industrial workers must play a predominant role over the rest of the working class. Not only that, we do not understand the second question: why autonomy must only come about within the industrial proletariat.

If we allow such reasoning, we must admit that the crisis of capitalism is a ‘mortal’ one, and not one of ‘transformation’. If the industrial proletariat are the most sensitive edge of the working class, they would also be the most fitted to perceiving the sickness of capitalism and of opposing it with a specific form of struggle, i.e. autonomous organisation. The other strata, the peasants for example, not being immediately in contact with the privileged stratum of production, would not heed these stimuli, and the possibility of autonomy would not arise.

It does not seem to us that capitalism is in ‘mortal crisis’. On the contrary, it seems to us that it is as lively and vigorous as ever. Its very obvious crisis is manifesting itself as a passing one, an evolution towards a very different type of capitalism, far more capable and efficient than that of the present time. Therefore we cannot speak in terms of a ‘final crisis’. Nevertheless, a tendency for autonomous working class organisation does exist.

Workers’ Autonomy

In fact, the present position of the reformists (parties and trade unions) is not a 'response' to capitalism's 'final crisis' any more than proletarian autonomy is. The collaboration of the unions and parties is not a new strategy but is the normal response from developing institutions to those in power. They would like to destroy the latter but must allow them to subsist so that the changeover can come about with the least possible damage to the structure, otherwise the ascending elite, when they come into power, will find themselves with a heap of rubble in their hands. That is the real position of the reformists. In the same way, working class autonomy intended as the remaining possibility of struggle, is not derived from capitalism's 'final crisis', but is part of the constant attempts of the class to free themselves from exploitation. In this sense we can see how workers have always looked for new and autonomous organisations in contrast to preceding ones (out of date or absorbed by the system), with the aim of surviving or fighting, and we can also see how these organisations have been consigned into the hands of the ascending elite, reached power, and denied the autonomous instance of the base of the workers.

We must study this mechanism of consigning autonomy into the hands of the leaders and guiding parties more closely. We must examine the causes of this religiosity, irrational motivations that act on and become a part of the structure, the lack of self-

confidence that seems to afflict the masses and throws them into the hands of the reformists.

We have asked what the role of the active minority should be within the perspective of working class autonomy. The conclusion is a constant measuring of the forces that determine the failure of class autonomy, i.e. the forces we have perhaps incorrectly summarised as 'religiosity' in order to underline their irrational essence. It is impossible to theorise the formation of an anarchist minority group acting on the masses beyond the level of their own interests in abstract. What we can agree upon is the essence and content of these interests. The smokescreen drawn by the reformists is hindering a proper evaluation of the workers' interests far more drastically than the brutal power of the bosses and the fascists did in the past. Social democracy's alliance with the bosses is the worst imaginable obstacle in the path of workers' freedom.

We must therefore establish a point of reference for anarchist action within the area of workers' autonomy. This can be found in the latter's' objective interests, the clarification of which constitutes an initial contribution by the anarchist minority. But this does not mean within the perspective of 'leadership' which, even if adopted by the most orthodox anarchist tendency, would end up tracing the path of social democracy, agent of the power structure. On the contrary, it means action within the workers' movement itself, starting

from the concept of autonomy and autonomous organisation concerning the workers' interests, linked to that of individual autonomy lived through the class perspective of revolutionary liberation.

The failure of so many concrete instances is that the action of anarchists, if clear at a certain analytical level, often errs in the choice of means, a decision that raises the whole question of ends to be attained. To attack the project of the parties and trade unions requires a clear idea of the means to be employed in the struggle, and not just a blind postponement to workers' spontaneity. The question of autonomy is not separate from the question of the choice of means in the struggle: the two are linked, and condition each other in turn. The violent perspective, workers' direct action such as sabotage, the destruction of work, etc., are not actions 'more to the left' than some other supposedly left-wing action. They are precise choices dictated by autonomy of interests, choices where the active presence of anarchists is of very great importance.

We must now stop and reflect carefully on the problem of the workers' interests. If they were to emerge, as in the Marxist analysis, from a concrete situation—the dominion of capital—one could, with a logical effort, talk of 'interests in themselves', corresponding to 'class for itself'. But these interests are only really those of the working class on condition that they recognise themselves as such and manage to overcome

the obstacles that have been deliberately constructed by the State, reject the false proposals of the reformists, and so on. In other words, we see a voluntaristic aspect in the autonomous action of the workers, an aspect that reaches the centre of their 'objective' class interests, but only on condition that this is obtained through struggle and awareness. And it is here that the positive action of anarchist fits in.

To become aware of one's own interests, a subjective rediscovery in objective form, is the essential condition for the verification of social revolution without first passing through State communism. Another aspect of anarchist action in the region of autonomy is that aimed at clarifying the relationship with power, leading to a solution of the abovementioned problem of the religiosity of the 'guide'.

Power does not solidify in one precise point of the forces of reaction. There are substantial differences between capitalists, bureaucracy, middle class and petty bourgeoisie, intellectuals and other elements, all within a very complex framework. No less substantial differences exist between parties in government, reformist parties, trade unions, the repressive organs of capital (army, police, judiciary, fascists. etc.). But beyond the specific differences in constitution and employment, all of these forces are united by the one basic need of every organisation of power : survival. In the first place they struggle for their own survival

and self-perpetuation in the situation that makes their existence possible; then, to make this survival easier they move on to the phase of development and the desire for even greater dominion.

That the Marxist doctrine is the expression of a certain middle class that aspires to power and the overcoming of the final obstacle that separates them from it, is an attractive and valid hypothesis, but one that needs to be gone into more deeply in our opinion. We cannot agree to simply see this as something to be found in the attitudes and interests of the middle and petty bourgeoisie alone. An equally important reflex exists in the irrational residual within the working class, which allows the development of the interests of the intermediate class that aspires to power. In this case the ascending elite is not the whole of the middle or petty bourgeois class, but a minority among them, the political parties and trade unions, who define themselves as the representatives of the workers' interests and those of the less financially endowed bourgeoisie.

That is why anarchists in the sense of an active minority should not define themselves a vanguard that is sensitive to a certain level of struggle and authorised to represent the masses. This would open the way to violent action as an end in itself, with the claim that it could solicit the workers' movement from outside as a consequence of certain actions 'exemplary' by their

very isolation. The very principle of workers' self-management and direct action as the patrimony of the exploited masses, and not the prerogative of a minority, would come into contrast with such a limited vision of the revolutionary task.

Relations Within the Working Class

The 'religiosity' that we have spoken of is not the only characteristic of the working class. This is more a basic sentiment than a precise element, something irrational that persists within the class, and which finds its origins in exploitation itself. It is concretised in the demand for 'vengeance', a kind of millenarianism that accompanies every kind of religion, and in the positive evaluation of certain principles—shared with the enemy—and which the latter are accused of having profaned.

Let us take an historical example. In the Middle Ages the German peasants rose up against the lords and the Church, demanding vengeance for the suffering and privation they had always been subjected to, but at the same time asking for the restoration of the Christian principle of poverty and morality in custom that had been profaned both by the lords and the Church. They were therefore fighting in the name of a desire for vengeance, hence put themselves—with great reticence in this case—into the hands of a leader in the name of a moral code shared by the exploiters who were considered profane by the people.

Today, changing the conditions of production and the composition of the classes involved in the social conflict, these relations remain constant within the working class. First of all religiosity, then morals. The first is the essential condition for falling into the hands of an elite aiming for the conquest of power and denying the existence of autonomy once again; the second is the condition for operating a radical selection within the working class itself, establishing the existence of a privileged strata that would be the first to be instrumentalised by the ascending elite.

The reason is simple. The moral values of the shop-keeping bourgeoisie persist within the working class. On this basis a division exists between 'skilled' and 'manual' workers, between professionally qualified workers who have a decent 'honourable' socially esteemed past, and those who live from day to day, the so-called rabble, usually present in the large cities. Marxism, typical product of the moral mentality of the bourgeoisie, has always insisted on this point, relegating the lumpen-proletariat to the margins of the revolutionary discourse, considering them with suspicion, washing their hands every time they find themselves obliged to approach them.

What is more serious is the fact that this is not simply a literary component that belongs to the priests of the Marxist church, but is also a common sentiment among the mass, one of so many factors of corporate

origins which, out of interest, has not been fought by the reformists. The latter's collaboration has in fact hindered any action capable of confronting the State with an irrecuperable situation of conflict.

We thus have: religiosity in general, which determines the acceptance of a leader identified in the ascending elite, and the moral residual that causes a deep division within the autonomous movement of the workers, laying the foundations for their instrumentalisation by the future power structure.

The first consequence of this moral residual is the refusal of every spontaneous tendency in the organisation of the struggle, any recourse to illegality, any action beyond the 'canons' of the current morality that has been artfully exploited by the bourgeoisie for many centuries. The division within the workers' movement causes a division in the choice of strategy to be used in the struggle. The indiscriminate condemnation of the use of criminality is a notable example of this perspective.

We do not want to take up an argument here that would require going into in great detail. We only want to say that the seeds of bourgeois morals, if not eradicated in time, are serious enough to cause a fracture of considerable importance.

Going into the problem we realise that if the 'religiosity' of vengeance is essentially a fruit of exploitation, therefore belongs to the class of producers

themselves, the bourgeois moral conception is not a fruit of exploitation, but reaches the class of producers through their contamination from the petty bourgeois class that is not easily distinguishable from themselves.

All the models that fill the Marxists' pages certainly do not help to clarify this distinction. The petty bourgeois class consists of shopkeepers (distribution), administrators (control), and police (repression). Shopkeepers represent the traditional bourgeoisie with their antiquated forms of distribution, and are in the process of being transformed, at least in the advanced capitalist countries. Their moral thought is diffused among other strata, for example the skilled workers. The administrators represent the part that controls the circulation of surplus value extracted by the capitalists. This is the most obtuse and retrograde class, the one most tied to a vision of life based on the values of the past, and careful to defend the privileges they have obtained up till now. In the growing phase of the State's contractual strength, this class identifies with the bureaucracy. The policing class cover all the elements of repression. Included in this class are the politicians, trade union officials, police force, priests, and all those who live on the margins of the producing class, repressing or helping to repress any sign of revolt. All of these brave people exalt and guarantee the continuation of bourgeois morality. The stratum of privileged producers, approximately identifiable with the industrial proletariat

by their situation and privilege, end up accepting these morals and imposing them on the lumpenproletariat through their negative judgement.

In the same way the ideology of work and production is imported from the class of the petty bourgeoisie. The work ethic, typically bourgeois, also covers a large part of the producing class with its essential condition: the safeguarding of production. Clearly those who have most interest in spreading such an ideology are the bourgeoisie themselves and the strata who safeguard their existence. An instructive parallel could be drawn between bourgeois morals, the ideology of production, and Marxism. In any case we cannot deny that even this aspect constitutes a great problem, alimented by the specific interests of the bourgeoisie and the parties in their service.

But relationships within the working class are affected by constant changes in production relations. The analysis of the latter enables us to identify the development of the workers' defense against exploitation as this exploitation, although constant, does not always express itself in the same way. The workers defend themselves and attack their exploiters, but this struggle and offensive take on different aspects in relation to the development of accumulation, the ultimate result of capitalism.

Today, within the very complex structure of advanced capitalism it would be a mistake not to see

the interdependence that exists between the producing classes of different countries due to capitalism's links at an international level clearly. This interdependence exists at two levels: first, as unequal exploitation depending on whether capitalism is in an advanced or an underdeveloped stage, and secondly according to the unequal development of capitalism within one country. The relationship between centre and periphery both at world and international level conditions relationships within the working class.

In Italy we can see a certain type of relationship in force between employers and producers, but we cannot crystallise this in one model that is valid for the whole of the country. In the first place we must see its relationship to the international situation. Secondly, we must see it in relationship to the South of Italy. For this reason the autonomous structure of the struggle must not close itself within the manufacturing dimension, but must include the situation of international and national conflict.

The problem is not an easy one. Many comrades have seen it simply as a problem of political equilibrium. To us it seems that, although it remains a political problem, it also presents the important technical aspect of how to organise the struggle from an autonomous point of view. Let us try to go into this a little further.

The groups of producers who, as we have seen, are making plans for a struggle based on autonomy,

i.e. the refusal of an intermediary such as parties or trade unions, must know the productive capacity of the manufacturing or agricultural complex and how to adapt their struggle in relation to autonomous management based on the choice of production perspectives (rational distribution of work). To do this it is necessary to know that surplus-value can be formed beyond the manufacturing and agricultural situation, extracted directly through the situation of underdevelopment in which one part of the country (or the world) is being held. In other words, the economic calculation based on autonomy, and therefore the very possibility of a future communist form of production, and the basis for the autonomous of struggles today, must not only bear in mind the extraction of profit at the centre of the capitalist complex, but also that which is reached through the simple existence of a centre and a periphery. The colonialist and imperialist situation opens vast horizons for recuperation and communist accumulation (not to be confused with the capitalist or State-capitalist kind). This must be clarified in order to understand that autonomy is not just a contingent factor, a way of building the struggle, only to consign it into the hands of an ascending elite, but is a new way of conceiving production relations, a revolutionary way of completely eliminating the surplus value that is derived from exploitation.

But the presence of a periphery is not just an

objective fact, it brings in subjective reality as well: men and women who suffer incredibly, exploited like beasts, who die of hunger. Men and women who live from chance, stamped with the infamous brand of criminality. This constitutes a whole explosive area that capitalism at a national and international level is hunting down with police and army, cudgels and bombs, with every means and no pity. But this is at the same time a periphery that is managing to open up the road towards a new society considered far nearer than is normally believed, because it is not seen through the deforming lens of ‘professionalism’. They are starting to rebuild the faith they had lost, a faith that comes into contrast with ‘religiosity’ and those who instrumentalise it: the parties and unions.

Not to bear this dualistic reality in mind means to fail to understand that even autonomous action can fall into the contradictions of particularism and racism. Even the revolutionary workers’ councils, if composed of workers closed within their ‘specialisation’, not opportunely vitalised by the presence of an active minority who are against the idea of party or union—expressions of a manufacturing centre that looks with disdain upon the underdeveloped periphery—can before long turn into imperialist workers’ councils, anti-room of instrumentalisation by the parties and of an even more terrible form of exploitation.

Workers' Autonomy: Surpassing Trade Unionism

Given the development of national trade union disputes, some comrades might think it natural to insert themselves within this movement with alternative claims or platforms aimed at radicalising the bargaining in an attempt to expel the trade union leadership, the Communist Party and other reformist groups. But this kind of action has nothing to do with proletarian autonomy.

The only possible way to turn the workers towards direct action is to go beyond the logic of disputes and collective bargaining. The struggle for better wages and demands for investment (especially in cases where it is necessary to reduce production) are areas where the bourgeoisie are able to create strata of workers' consensus and acquiescence in order to impose restructuring, and attempts to lead disputes in the direction of the workers' interests results in increasing faith in the unions.

In the face of a complex and many-sided restructuring of industry the reasons for which are compound (increasing production in some sectors, a complete elimination of it in others; adapting to technological change, or returning to old and proven methods of exploitation), it is absurd to move in an optic that defends trade unionism, whose claim to confront general problems is only a façade for creating equilibrium within the capitalist system.

Now that the supernational bourgeoisie find themselves managing the economy in a speculative and substantially unproductive key, it does not make sense to think one can fight them by “imposing” investment and new consumer channels. When restructuring leads to mass redundancies, to reply with demands for employment and a union ‘guaranteed wage’, enters the schemes of bourgeois interest: many promises, some money right away, which is taken back through other channels, and so go the plans aimed at weakening the proletariat’s capacity for resistance, and re-enforcing the economic structure.

Demands for work by the unemployed invariably result in not getting a stable job, at the most a short spell in a government sponsored scheme to be used as direct or indirect blackmail against the employed workers.

Even recent proposals such as a reduction of the working week to 35 hours, if inserted into the logic of the refusal of work, are objectives of no real consequence in that capitalism (far more elastic in its structure than it was in the past) can impose greater exploitation even in situations of reduced working hours.

Left-wing trade unionism can at best put the bourgeoisie in difficulty, but is not capable of even scratching their positions of strength, whereas the autonomous actions of the proletariat need to

move on more immediate foundations, allowing the development of certain concrete forms of struggle that can be experimented daily.

The authentic unifying moments for the class, in which it is possible to mobilise in first person, exist in the contradictions inherent in working conditions in the factory and those of the proletariat in general, in the living area (physical region of exploitation), the structures of production and consumption, the factory hierarchy, politics, administration, the police, fascists, work pace, pollution, mobility, prices, rents, bills, etc. Direct action, the self-conscious struggle of the masses, can only be born from aspects of every day life, not abstract programmes or platforms. Class initiative must be concrete and managed in first person, without the mediation of trade unions or political parties. These apparently minimal struggles actually represent the first step upon which to base a new consciousness and organisational practice, starting off from the contradictions that are suffered daily in individual situations within the organisation of work and consumption and gradually approaching general confrontation, always getting closer to the roots of class oppression. The logic of proletarian autonomy is therefore one of sporadic growth, so there can be different levels of autonomous expression.

One of the main points of this discourse is the smallest element of mass struggle: the mass organism,

which by its very nature does not comprise the whole class in a given situation, but is strictly tied to experiences of direct action. These organisms are formed by the exploited during particular struggles and moments of awareness and reflection preceding and following them, not as a result of discussions by groups on the problem. The more they merge with and become an internal element of the mass movement, the more effective they become, sometimes without realising it. The validity of their activity can be verified in their absorption into successive mass actions that are capable of developing or surpassing the indications they have provided. These organisms should not be considered a form of counterpower or alternative unions directing groups or parties, all denominations that are more or less consciously transmission belts of some ideological regroupment. Mass organisms are one stage in autonomy, but they always represent partial aspects that can be surpassed. They are the first point of reference, but their function is always to remain tied to precise situations. Their initiatives do not therefore represent the needs of the whole of the proletariat, of which they are nevertheless an expression. Their institutionalisation in the party sense would therefore be impossible without changing their very nature.

There was a time when a superevaluation of mass organisms led to a purely organisational concept of autonomy, resulting in a passage to autonomous trade

unions, and where proletarian autonomy came to be reduced to trade union autonomy. We must therefore examine the whole process of autonomy, where the intervention of the active minority (specific organisms) should not be directed towards the formation of mass organisms, but towards stimulating moments of direct action, the only thing capable of expressing true proletarian organisational forms.

Even the most violent encounter with economic contradictions does not necessarily push the proletariat to find a solution in direct action. We see evidence of this every day. The most recent examples are the response to the closure of industrial plants, redundancies and increased dependence on social security, which has usually been in the form of the now old practices of meetings that are open to all the democratic forces, mediation with the government and local authorities, etc.. Mass direct action is therefore not an automatic reply, but is the result of a process that comes about through a fairly slow and not easily tangible process of maturation. The dialectical process existing within the masses is capable of working out certain forms of retaliation, even repeating the same experience more than once before surpassing it, transforming mere lack of faith in reformist structures into the capacity to attack.

Comrades of the active minority must therefore act in the direction of a re-entry into this process, taking the indications put forward by the masses and

carrying them on as analyses and information that are useful for the struggle. Often the classical instruments for spreading proposals are disdained (posters, leaflets, wall writing, etc.). Every now and then someone makes the great discovery that they are useless, that instead one 'must remain within the situation', or that things should be discussed directly, etc.. But this is not a problem. Posters, leaflets, newspapers, discussions (or even actions of the so-called 'vanguard') are simply instruments, what is important is the use that is made of them. If one is simply going to say 'long live autonomy', 'ahead with direct action', 'no to repression', and other such meaningless remarks, they are clearly senseless. Nor is it enough to single out concrete issues (e.g. piece work, contractual work, wages, prices, etc.) as the fact that the problem exists is not enough, but there must be a disposition for it to be perceived. There must be a synthesis therefore between the proposition and the potential for direct action.

The functioning of the specific organism, or active minority, is subject to a series of contradictions that do not always make the relationship with the mass easy. The reason for these contradictions lies in the fact that most often such organisms are not formed as a result of direct action, but are due to theoretical sedimentation concerning the experiences of proletarian autonomy. It is possible however that following prolonged activity, mass organisms can evolve into specific ones, just as it

can happen that comrades of the active minority can participate in the functioning of mass organisms. This produces a fluidity of organisational forms within the process of autonomy. Many comrades prefer not to make a distinction between mass organism and active minority, talking instead of different organisational levels within the process of autonomy. This is not altogether unfounded, and in fact the two kinds of organisation can blend roles. The distinction makes sense in order to avoid certain arbitrary identification by militant ‘autonomists’ with the organisms of the mass, and their consequent self-selection as a vanguard. Direct action and the self-managed struggle of the workers are the only criteria for moments of organisation expressed directly by the masses. It is therefore a question of making a distinction between what is clearly expressed by the proletariat in struggle, and what are only very useful attempts to clarify and elaborate proposals.

The need for a continual updating of organisms gives space to opportunism and one even hears comrades who call for autonomy making statements such as, “We don’t absolutely refuse to negotiate with the bosses, but only accept to do so in situations where it leads to a recognition of gains that have already been conquered through direct struggles”, or, ‘Trade unionism can still be valid in backward situations, where it becomes in itself a step forward.’ Negotiation

to legalise conquests is a contradiction in terms and seems to be an elegant reproposal of the principle of the delegate. The discourse on backward situations can come to justify anything under the sun.

The work of the active minority is conditioned by the reality around them, but specific actions are still possible. Although carried out by a minority, when drawn from thoroughly analysed experiences in other situations, these actions can carry information and forms of struggle that are susceptible to development, and possibilities of direct action where the industrial workers are a minority compared to the rest of the proletariat. It is a mistake to think that autonomy is a typical expression of the large factories in the North, and that it cannot be extended to other situations. Apart from the fact that autonomous action has certainly not yet taken the place of trade union illusions, that which is carried out is always action characteristic of a particular reality, and not the only possible expression of autonomy. It is moreover always susceptible to further developments that are not always foreseeable.

It would be easy to say: trade unionism is still predominant, therefore I shall continue to move, even if only partly, within the trade union optic. Autonomy is an historical process, an objective reality in the course of development, and not a movement managed by so-called autonomous militants. The potential for a growth in autonomy always exists, even if it is repressed,

and it is on this alone that we base our work.

Trade-unionism cannot be surpassed through the simple spreading of propaganda about other positions aimed at dissuading the worker from belonging to the union (also because it is not enough to take away the trade unions for autonomous struggle to develop), but rather through the proposal of forms of struggle that the workers are receptive to, allowing the construction of more advanced bases. Self-reduction of the work pace, already common in certain factories in the North (where the struggle against the work pace has been the most advanced expression of autonomous activity), and also some in the South, represent, in this phase, the type of struggle that can come about through a qualitative change in the workers' consciousness, capable of reaching the point of a total self-management of their own interests. One of the main tasks of the specific organism should be that of generalising and consolidating this and other forms of struggle as far as possible. These are proposals that can be made directly without the mediation of the shop stewards, trade union officials, or ideological militants, because they involve the working class at the place of exploitation itself and in what he knows best, his work. They avoid abstract, exhausting arguments with the Communist Party or groups, because, carrying the contradictions back to their original source, they allow the class to make a clear choice of what their interests

are, and thus create beyond any ideological discussion, the foundations for a mass confrontation with the trade unions and all the other repressive structures. They progressively introduce more advanced forms of direct action and tougher forms of struggle: sabotage, blockages, distribution of products in stock (or free distribution of food products, etc, in suitable cases) without forcing levels of consciousness. They also represent a way for predicting and combatting projects of redundancies and dependence on social security due to excess production: a defence of jobs managed directly by the workers without a supine acceptance of the work ideology. Obviously, the trade unions can also succeed in repressing these struggles, even opening disputes for a reduction of the work pace or referring to 'general themes of, major importance', just as autonomous actions can be used as occasional supports for a single dispute. These dangers are always present, and it is useless to spill tears over the fact that an experience of direct action burns itself out, or that it does not immediately move on to higher levels, because the process of autonomy should be considered in its complexity, also at an international level, and not be reduced to one single experience.

It should be clear therefore, that the function of the active minority consists not so much of devising forms of struggle and objectives, as that of understanding the effective potential of the mass.

To explain better we shall refer for a moment to the railway sector. It would be too easy, starting from the fact that in the first place a transport strike affects the passengers, to propose, for example, a form of struggle based on not charging passengers for tickets, thus creating a unitary situation within the proletariat. Not that this is not a valid hypothesis, but the problem lies not in the technical application of the proposal, but in the disposition of the mass (workers-proletarians-passengers) to lay the foundations for a combined practice of direct action that can only come about through a whole process that is open to error, crises of lack of self-confidence, or instrumentalisation. It would obviously be just as much of a mistake to applaud every initiative on the part of the workers, always seeing in them possibilities for autonomous outlets.

It is necessary to refer not to a hypothetical level of perfection, but to the effective availability of the mass, which in this case would mean stimulating a process (which is in fact already happening) of reappropriation in the living areas, capable of linking up with outlets in the service industry.

The link with the living area is not an episodic factor, nor is it something that is due to particular circumstances. Exploitation also occurs at the level of consumption (as well as work), to which all the other political, social and cultural structures that constitute the capitalist organisation of an area are related. The

reality of consumption is therefore not secondary to that of production in the aims of the struggle, and one could say that the two are tending to synthesize in the living area, point of unification of both employed and unemployed workers, whose main expression has been squatting, where there has also been a development of an autonomous female social role.

The appropriation of an autonomous social and economic role by women also opens the way for an autonomous sexual role. The proletarian woman, used to having to bear the greatest burden of capitalist exploitation at the point of consumption, has great fighting potential concerning the struggle in the living area, putting her in a position of a vanguard in respect to the men. Some feminist projects that speak of self-management of their sexuality by women and form educational programmes in this direction, leave out of consideration the question of real appropriation, thus falling into an ideological situation and eventually finding themselves only proposing a more tolerable management of their sexual oppression. Besides, the most overtly reformist solutions (free abortion, play schools, creches. etc.) merely come to rationalise repression. The proposal of work for women is sometimes seen as an instrument of emancipation; but salaried work is not emancipation, but further slavery, and does not even create a weakening of family or social oppression. This does not mean that

women's' liberation should be postponed until after the revolution. On the contrary, the female proletarian struggle in the territory, the appropriation of an economic and social role by women (and therefore of their sexual autonomy) resolves immediate contradictions, as well as being at the same time a part of the revolutionary struggle for communism. Also, leaving aside women's struggle, the (useless) demand for infrastructures ('social salaries') represents a way of imposing a trade union logic in the living area (see disputes on housing supported by groups), a clear demonstration of imposing on proletarian reality. The work in the housing estates, if not set out on the basis of immediate contradictions, can easily end up in competition with the parish, evening classes, clinics, meals for proletarian children, and lots of people's parties, with the Red Flag in the place of hymns. There is nothing new in this: competition with the parish is in the tradition of Italian reformism.

Rent strikes, squatting, self-reduction of bills and transport charges, are all a defence of wages or living conditions, that also permit the unemployed to conquer a dignified level of existence during the struggle in the territory alongside the employed workers, and not through social security payments and subsidies, which are only instruments for dividing the proletariat.

Going beyond trade-unionism is not therefore some ideological argument that is more or less

revolutionary or more to the left, but is an historical necessity, the only way to rebuild, in the face of changed conditions, a defence of the immediate interests of the proletariat outside trade union negotiation and practice. The new data is no longer a question of struggle becoming finalised in disputes, but struggles that represent in their very form and development, the satisfaction of proletarian needs.

The defence of health in the factory is realised by self-reduction of the work pace and the refusal of mobility, with systematic boycotts and sabotage of production and restructuring, preventing the boss from carrying out redundancies.

The indications we have glanced at are just a start, a first possible basis upon which to act, but which already have the capacity to go beyond the purely defensive aspect, and lay the immediate foundations for the offensive. The self-managed struggle of the mass is therefore capable of uniting in one practice, both the problem of economic defence and that of revolutionary struggle in the long term, surpassing, through their actions and not through anti-reformist propaganda, trade union illusions and practice.

Workers' Councils, Self-Management and Developments in Proletarian Autonomy

The Comrades of Kronstadt Editions

What can the theory of workers' councils tell us today? Does it lead to a possible opening towards proletarian autonomy?

The comrades who have theorised this form of proletarian organisation have anything but a static or fixed vision, but they also see in the councils more than anything a form of organisation based on workers' self-management. The councils thus represent a workers' State, a dictatorship of the proletariat, a way in which the proletariat can exercise their class domination by being organised in such a way at the workplace (and we would add also in the living areas).

What is the main idea upon which they are based? The workers taking over the structures of production and the capitalist organisation of work, to develop a new mode of production.

In fact, in their conception of a communist economy, the councils do not manage to go beyond the limits within which they were born and which justify their existence, that is, the factory and the capitalist organisation of work and, leaving the form of production unaltered, succeed in only forming a different criterion of consumption.

The socialist society envisaged by the council

communists even bears a close resemblance to capitalism, and the calculation of the individual worker's consumption based on hours worked does not have the value of the break with wage earning that it professes to have, because in reality work remains a commodity that is no longer to be exchanged for money, but for another commodity.

In the period in which they developed all over Europe, the councils created an unstable situation that on the one hand aimed at opposing the bourgeoisie in the factory on the one hand, and on the other left living conditions unaltered, in other words continued the capitalist organisation of work.

The utopia of the councils is therefore the control of the State and the bourgeoisie by the proletariat, a State and bourgeoisie that they do not have the power to eliminate. They therefore stopped at the factory, competing with the bourgeoisie for power within the limits of their own boundaries.

In these terms the councils are simply a form of counterpower, organised workers' power opposed to bourgeois power. The Marxist-Leninists have a good hand in criticising the theory and practice of counterpower, accusing it of reformism, saying that it is not a question of opposing one form of power to another, but of taking away the bourgeoisie's instruments and establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat through the party, which can at best be

assisted by the organizational forms of workers' councils. In this way we find ourselves back in square one, back to the Bolshevik theories whose total inconsistence has been unequivocally demonstrated in other works by those who support workers' councils.

But one fact remains: that as a form of counterpower, the councils cannot go beyond reformism, engaging themselves in a wearying struggle with the bourgeoisie without really questioning their existence. The councils would either end up exhausted, or give space to repression, as happened in Germany and Russia. Their limitations were clearly sensed by Lenin, who was clever enough not to attack them. He actually proclaimed them supreme organs of power, being anxious to extend State power and that of the dominating class, the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, personified in the Bolshevik party. The bloody repression in Germany and the bureaucratic involution in Russia have demonstrated the limitations of the council communist movement that takes the form of the extreme consequence of the syndicalist logic. The council communist movement undoubtedly represented an enormous qualitative leap compared to the syndicalist type of organisation but, like the trade unions, took for granted the existence of an employer with whom to negotiate. The councils therefore implicitly affirm the impossibility of going beyond the capitalistic organisation of work, and therefore the very

reason for the existence of a bourgeoisie.

The expropriation and self-management of the means of production by the proletariat is an illusion: the means of production as such (machinery, plants, etc.) are transitory and perishable. They constantly being updated within the capitalist organisation, and this includes the substitution of plants, readjustments, modifications and restructuring.

What the workers would really inherit in the case of an 'expropriation' of the means of production is nothing other than the capitalistic organization of work and its logic of hierarchy and exploitation. To self-manage such a reality would create no substantial improvement for the worker, and the thought of working more or less the same way as before, even for the edification of the 'socialist society', would be small consolation.

It is not by chance that 'self-management' has been discussed or imposed in various bourgeois States (Switzerland, France) or pseudo socialist ones (Yugoslavia, Algeria), proposing to the proletariat their self-exploitation. Also, as we shall see further on, the structural foundations for a true discourse on self-management such as could be made at the beginning of the century are lacking. In either case therefore it would be a question of always pseudo forms of self-management, except for isolated cases of small industrial and agricultural complexes.

The only valid self-managed activity for the workers is therefore that of self-management of the struggle, i.e., direct action.

It is therefore not a question of imposing oneself on capitalist structures in order to use them for socialist ends, but that of building new relationships between man and nature.

We are not speaking of simply making ‘a clean slate’ of the past, because if the present structures are destroyed without creating something new, the most probable thing would be a return to the old models, even although with different labels.

The discourse therefore leads us to the problem of means and ends: if one acts in terms of disputes and the struggle for power (trade-unionism, workers’ councils, counterpower), the result can only be a return to the point of departure. It is therefore necessary to synthesize the means with the ends desired, and construct the new social model now, within the struggles of the proletariat in the present society.

The council communists cannot manage to theorise any forms of proletarian struggle apart from the wildcat strike, not trade unionist perhaps in form, but in content because the significance of dispute and bargaining is implicit in the strike itself as a form of struggle. Even insurrection (armed struggle) does not always solve the problem because, taken in itself, it is only a way for some party, presumed representative of

the proletariat, to reach power. Proletarian autonomy (intended as a real mass movement and not the label of an ideological grouping) has recently succeeded in imposing activities that are capable of going beyond disputes and trade unions in all their forms.

We hear of the struggle against production (self-reduction of the work pace, etc.), i.e. activities that represent the satisfaction of the workers' interests (health in the factory, the block against restructuring and therefore against redundancies, etc.) without having recourse to trade union mediation, either directly or indirectly.

In this way the synthesis means-ends is achieved: struggles are not finalised in claims or disputes, but reach their own aims directly, and are valid as such.

These struggles are revolutionary and communist even though they represent the defence of minor interests. Through direct action and the collective responsibilisation of the proletariat concerning everyday problems, they are moving in the direction of the negation of capitalist organisation, and doing so through its essential component, salaried work.

By advancing their autonomy the proletariat are not affirming themselves as a class, they are denying and annulling themselves as such, realising themselves fully as humanity, thus taking away from the bourgeoisie their only support, a subordinate class who work, produce, consume.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is impossible because the proletariats' interest is to annul themselves as a class, in order to become humanity in the fullest sense of the word. An eventual would-be dictatorship of the proletariat (even if it were represented as 'anti-State' or 'from the base'), could only be exercised by 'representatives' of the proletariat, the presumed holders of their true essence and will. The proletariat therefore struggle for their own interests, denying themselves as a class, and at the same time denying the entire capitalist system.

In the total refusal of the capitalistic organisation of work through direct action, the proletariat are elaborating socialist communist relations, the alternative social model. In other words, direct action is already communism, the self-construction by the proletariat of consciousness and communist organisation, new social relationships as an alternative to capitalism.

The acquisition of this capacity by the proletariat is the result of an historical process made up of numerous experiences, mistakes and theoretical sedimentation that the development of production relations has also influenced.

The production relations that existed at the beginning of the century, with work in the factory still in part skilled, allowed the worker a cultural space of his own, albeit it minimal. He had a self-awareness that made him feel bound to the work organization

in such a way as to prevent him from realistically posing himself the problem of destroying it, but rather of taking possession of it himself. This figure of the worker first found expression in the trade unions, then in the councils, neither of which, as we have seen, have managed to break through the patterns of capitalism. If the Leninist and party experiences have nothing at all to do with the workers and constitute only middle class interference, trade-unionism, syndicalism and workers' councils were on the contrary experiences of proletarian autonomy, because they constituted the first basis for a distinction of class interests. It is not a question of refusing them, but of surpassing them as immature proletarian experiences.

Present production relations have destroyed all the proletariat's cultural space, and are continuing to do so in such a way that, in order to safeguard his humanity, the worker is obliged to employ his individual and collective intelligence against production and the capitalist organisation of consumption in the territory, the latter assuming an increasing importance in the present mechanism of exploitation.

In struggling against the organisation of production and consumption, the proletariat are creating new cultural space, new social relations in forms irreconcilable with capitalism.

This discourse has led many to declare that autonomy is a practice for the use and consumption of

the so-called mass (unskilled) worker, and that, given that this figure is destined to disappear in favour of a return to skilled work due to restructuring it is necessary to form a new party or organization capable of becoming the 'memory' of past experiences of struggle in order to re-elaborate them and give the proletariat new indications fitted to changed conditions.

This thesis does not take account of certain elements:

1) In recent years capitalist restructuring has already brought about important changes both in the organisation of production and the functioning of the work process. But these changes have always put an accent on mobility, applying it to the stratum generally considered to be technicians. One could say that the main aim of this restructuring is to be able to dispose of a vast stratum of interchangeable unskilled labour to be used for brief periods and at a very high work pace. This allows the capitalists to expel workers from the productive process not only through redundancies, but also through super-exploitation that pushes them to leave the workplace of their own accord. The presence of a vast stratum of unemployed then augments underemployment and underpayment in collateral productive activities (domicile workers, etc.). It should also be borne in mind that the continual readjusting of production being carried out by the capitalists at the present time requires a proletariat that are not tied to a precise way of producing, but who are able to adapt

to the different systems put into effect (not always a question of technical innovation, but also restructuring with the aim of increasing repression). In this context skills and grades are only a means for dividing workers and stimulating collaboration. Present restructuring therefore seems to be going against the criterion of skilled work, towards the extension of mobility, the jack of all trades, even in sectors which until recently were considered skilled. An elastic system of production cannot base itself on skilled work, because of the latter's static nature.

2) This reality renders trade union claims and disputes, with their adjacent forms of struggle (strikes, factory occupations, etc.) useless. These are instruments that cannot go beyond partial control or counterpower, in the face of a capitalism capable of totally controlling the management of production. Continual restructuring, with the dismembering of the factory environment, and work mobility, puts the worker in an unstable position, depriving him of any bargaining power whatsoever. For this reason proletarian autonomy has expressed itself in the struggle directly against production: self-reduction of the work pace, direct and immediate refusal of mobility and noxious work, boycotts and sabotage of production and restructuring, etc.. These struggles, begun organically in 1967/68 and first developed parallel to the 'great disputes' and expiry of contracts, have increasingly been recognised

by the proletariat as their only valid instruments of defense, not complementary to, but an alternative to trade unionsim. Struggles against production are not aimed at gaining bargaining power, but at contrasting, time after time, the bosses' steps to increase exploitation and decrease labour. It is not by chance that the action of the trade unions today is that of suppressing these struggles, both through launching false programmes, and through overt repression.

3) Proletarian experiences,even if they wear themselves out, do not disappear entirely but sediment and change from one sector to another, hence we see how certain criteria of struggle applied in the factory are then generalised over the territory with similar forms of struggle: squatting, self-reduction of rents, bills, fares, food prices, etc., valid also for the unemployed and part time workers. The struggle against production therefore extends over the whole territory, giving the unemployed and underemployed the possibility of fighting, not for an improbable job, but for a real defense of their standard of living. The thesis of the struggle against production obviously does not apply to the services sector (transport, hospitals, etc.) where the bourgeoisie have an interest in the existence of inefficient conditions. These are unproductive sectors which capitalism uses as channels for speculation.

4) Even a radical restructuring of capitalism could not destroy the sedimentation of experiences of

autonomous struggles. For example, an elimination of the assembly line in favour of co-management or pseudo self-management of production could eliminate the specific struggle of self-reduction of the work pace, but not certain criteria of direct action that the reduction of the work pace would have left the seeds of. That is to say, the proletariat possess a 'memory' of their own, and therefore the development of class autonomy does not depend solely on the structural modifications of capitalism, but also on experiences of autonomy accumulated beforehand. Forms of 'self-management' and co-management already exist in certain situations, but it would be difficult for them to take on a general character.

5) The various parties and organizations who consider themselves the memory of the working class always tend to filter problems through the polarising optic of power groups, thereby having a negative effect on the proletariat. This discourse obviously excludes the role of the active minority (or specific organisms), but rather addresses them towards acts of clarification, circulation of information and the generalisation of experiences of direct action.

Immediate struggles against production are almost unanimously accepted as valid by the so-called area of autonomy, apart from a few who say that it is useless to waste time with autonomous struggles, believing it necessary to build the party and that this should not be

distracted by movement and turmoil.

These immediate struggles, although accepted, are nearly always interpreted as supports or collateral aspect of other ‘political’ and organisational requirements: the thirtyfive hour week, armed struggle, the party again, factory and housing committees, also seen as organs of counterpower.

The objective of the 35-hour week, presented as a concrete ‘outlet’ for present struggles against production, represents the typical attitude of those who, wanting to coat their proposals with a touch of realism, end up falling into the vague and incomprehensible.

Self-reduction of working hours could be an extremely valid form of struggle, similar to the immediate struggles we have already mentioned, but precisely for this reason cannot be pinned down in one objective: why 35 hours and not, for example, 30? Who decides? The answer is clear: the potential of the class struggle in that particular situation, therefore a priori and theoretical decisions on such matters do not make sense.

The line of armed struggle (in the form of the military party) starts right away from a total lack of faith in the content of these struggles and their only validity is seen in their potential for armed conflict. Certainly, workers’ autonomy does pose the problem of violence, and one could say that all forms of autonomous action place themselves in the logic of violence and illegality.

The problem is not therefore out of place, but the groups proposing such a line are constructing, through their own initiative, a practice of violence that they want to impose as the supreme outlet in the process of proletarian autonomy, thereby electing themselves as managers and arbitrators. It is the party discourse once again, which, instead of moving along all possible roads, bases itself on the military and insurrectional one.

Those who speak of the party are those who have the least faith in the possible generalisation of direct action and immediate struggle against production, defining the latter as contingent movements of little importance: a proletariat accustomed to confronting immediate problems directly and without a delegate is a very bad taker of orders and directions, and difficult to subordinate to the will of a party.

Most common, however, are the positions of those who mean to organise proletarian autonomy in factory committees and intersectoral tenants' associations. Included in this category are those who consider the mass organism to be an essential starting point for autonomous struggles, and those who measure the validity of a struggle by the organisation it leaves behind. The first therefore give precedence to the actions of coordination by the 'vanguard' in the building of organisms, the second to the formation of organisms during the struggle. Often, though, the two positions combine, with various nuances.

The result of the first is a series of pseudo mass organisms (autonomous collectives, workers' committees and tenants' associations, which are usually called 'organised proletarian autonomy') and which in reality are minorities (specific organisms), or quite simply political groups. The non-awareness of their role renders them substantially useless and also dangerous.

On the other hand the results of the second are usually delusions, in that the mass organisms, authentic expressions of the direct action of the mass movement, are born, die or develop in the struggle and for the struggle, often without the practical possibility of characterising themselves or of being characterised as such, and therefore of becoming institutionalised in precise structures.

In general one could say that an organisational conception of proletarian autonomy is counterproductive and indirectly repressive in that it results in the constitution of so-called committees of workers' power and counterpower, whose only immediate possibility is to act as small alternative unions, and therefore struggle in a game of escalation of claims and contracts with the official unions.

In perspective, their optic of counterpower cannot lead to anything other than to involvement in workers' councils and self-management. A possible council communist and self-managed neosyndical road already defeated and surpassed by the experiences of

the proletariat, would not find even a structural base from which to draw a minimum of significance today, and would find itself instrumentalised in the sense of pseudo self-management.

In conclusion we can say that direct action is born from and develops on potential and levels of struggle, to be verified from time to time. It can express itself minimally, just as it can reach high levels of class confrontation, but no one of these experiences can be caged within structures or patterns, in fixed programmes or objectives. On the contrary, what they leave behind is sedimentation for new and often unforeseeable superior developments and autonomous organisational consciousness, communist social relations. The shortcomings of council communism, its incapacity to go beyond competing for power with the bourgeoisie in the factory without managing to put the existence of the latter in question, was also understood by a Russian anarchist current (the Dielo Truda) which in 1926 drew up an organisational platform mistakenly known as the Archinov Platform.

In the latter was proposed the foundation of a specific anarchist communist political organisation that, parallel to the expropriation of the means of production by the proletariat organised in workers' councils, would take on the task of engaging the political superstructure, the State, in direct confrontation, and demolishing it. This conception of organisation (at two

levels, one specific, political; the other at mass level) does not get to the roots of the shortcomings of council communism, and limits itself to trying to compensate for certain defects in action. It also introduces a series of ambiguous elements into the discourse alongside others that are extremely valid and interesting. This is not the place to go into the problems concerning the Dielo Trudo and organisation in general, but we would like to make a few points on the subject.

The complexity of bourgeois power is not finalised in the organised violence of the State. Not only would it not be enough for the proletariat to expropriate the means of production in order to eliminate bourgeois power, but even the immediate liquidation of the State would not solve the problem. As we have already seen, the main support of bourgeois power in its economic and state forms, is the acceptance by the proletariat of their role as such. For this reason, in order to deny and annul bourgeois power the proletariat must in the first place annul themselves as a class, to realise themselves fully as humanity through the construction of direct action and communist relations.

This theme is alluded to more than once in the platform, but is not carried to its logical conclusion. The reason can be found in the weakest point of the platform, the unknowing acceptance of certain Leninist principles. It is not a question of authoritarianism (as some anarchists think), but of making reference to a

theory beyond the proletariat, that is, to an ideology; this was elaborated for the first time precisely by Lenin, with his thesis of the party as consciousness beyond the class.

It is precisely the transposition of the platform on to an ideological level that has pushed its instigators to try to go beyond the limitations of the council communist movement, not in the direction of the mass potential for direct action, but through the political action of anarchist communist militants with a strong libertarian ideology, but whose terms become vague and unclear.

THE COMRADES OF KRONSTADT EDITIONS

Autonomous Movement of the Turin Railway Workers
ORGANIZATION OF THE AUTONOMOUS WORKERS' NUCLEUS

The present situation is characterised by an alliance between employers, trade unions and reformist parties. The first are using the help of the unions and so-called parties of the Left in order to continue exploitation, finding a way to make the workers pay the price of the economic crisis through a considerable sum of money paid to the industrialists by the State, thereby allowing them to survive for a few more years. To complete the picture, the parties of the Left, (with the Communist Party in the lead) are asking the working class to make

sacrifices in order to save the employers and their servants.

The present characteristic of the unions and reformist parties is therefore that of collaboration with the employers; their most important task is that of extinguishing the spontaneous workers' movement, suggesting sacrifice and condemning the workers who are disposed to carrying on a tougher form of struggle with the usual slander (calling them provocateurs).

Under these conditions it does not seem to us that the trade union can be used as an instrument of struggle.

The three main unions, the SFI, SAUFI and the SIUF are putting their collaboration into effect by selling out the railway workers through a project of restructuring that means a heavier workload for those who are employed (increased productivity), with less money (wage blocks), and an increase in unemployment.

These anti-worker objectives are backed up by demagoguery and a strong condemnation of any initiative. In this way they want to get the proposal accepted that management cannot take on wage increases, that to keep up productivity the number of working hours must remain unaltered, that the so-called phenomenon of absenteeism must be fought, and that to control the worker better the process of functional skills and work mobility will have to be re-organised.

Clearly they want to destroy all will to struggle, creating a financial situation that is unsupportable for most, hence the recourse to overtime, giving the bosses the arm of blackmail perfected by the use of the selective mechanism that stops anyone who is not capable and disciplined from getting on (in other words, whoever does not let himself be used and who refuses absolute respect for the bosses). THE AUTONOMOUS UNION, FISAFS, is developing a struggle in opposition to the three central trade unions, and claims to be autonomous.

The FISAFS is trying to exploit the rage and discontent of the workers in order to gain mass adhesion to its corporative and reactionary line. The trade-unionism of this so-called autonomous organisation is a further element in delaying the real possibility of workers' struggle at the base, which is very strong at the present time. The aim of the FISAFS is therefore that of channelling the workers into a corporative logic necessary for the industrialists, political parties, the government and capitalism, in order to consolidate exploitation and make it last.

The FISAFS therefore, in defending the employers' interests, cannot possibly employ the methods of struggle that characterise and qualify workers' autonomy. At the level of alliances and political decisions, it becomes impossible for the FISAFS to differentiate itself from the other union organisations

that are in opposition to the three central majority-holding unions (for example, the USFI-CISNAL). **TRUE PROLETARIAN AUTONOMY** is the only possible solution for the continuation of the struggle against the employers and their servants. To do this it is necessary to begin to form Autonomous Workers' Nuclei. These nuclei, such as those we want to create among the Turin railway workers, are born from within a precise productive reality, and should consider themselves a constant point of reference for the reality outside in the living areas, the land, the schools and so on, and draw them into the struggle.

Beginning from a clear conception of proletarian autonomy, two dangers ever present in sectorial or trade union methods of struggle are eliminated:

- a) the bureaucratisation of the structure;
- b) the tendency towards a corporate vision of the struggle.

THE AUTONOMOUS WORKERS' NUCLEUS organises itself autonomously of the political parties and trade unions, in order to better defend the worker as a man. Its perspective of organisation and struggle keep in mind the double necessity of imposing the confrontation both at the level of production (wages, contracts, etc.), and at the level of the individual worker's life (work risks, alienation, necessary links between living area, place of work, school, etc.).

Autonomy is therefore a reevaluation of the man in

the worker, with a clear view of the struggle aimed at safeguarding the conditions which render possible work and life itself.

THE AUTONOMOUS WORKERS' NUCLEUS

A) Characteristics

- Is an organisation that means to distinguish itself from the trade unions including the autonomous versions of such.
- Its autonomy is based on an antibureaucratic structure.
- It is based on the elimination of the permanent delegate and the negation of professional representatives.
- All the workers are engaged in the struggle against the bosses and their servants.
- This involvement in the struggle is permanent and does not limit itself to the strike periods fixed by the trade unions.
- Each component of the Autonomous Workers' Nucleus considers himself to be in continual struggle against the bosses and their servants, in the same way as the latter are continually in struggle against the workers in their attempt to perpetuate exploitation.
- The Autonomous Workers' Nucleus has no link with trade union ideology or practice, while its anti-employer position qualifies it clearly and without doubt as an instrument that the workers have created for their own emancipation.
- Propaganda activity and struggles directed at obtaining precise results, and the choice of means for

the realization of these struggles, are all elements to be clarified by the Autonomous Workers' Nucleus.

– To belong to an Autonomous Workers' Nucleus is the logical step for all those who consider they have been betrayed by the various trade union organisations and who want to continue the struggle against the State-employer, widening this struggle in a perspective that is totally different to that of trade union power.

B) Methods

- The repression put into effect by the bosses with the help of their servants is constant. It is exercised over us in many ways: reducing the spending power of wage increases; refusing legitimate increases; putting pressure on the worker by avoiding taking on more personnel and increasing work risks; nullifying our struggles through the unions' politics of recuperation. This repression must be fought with a struggle that is also constant. So: permanent repression, permanent conflict.
- The comrades making up the Autonomous Workers' Nucleus should have a clear idea of the direction the struggle against exploitation should take. The boss strikes the worker as part of a whole (the productive collectivity), therefore when he strikes him as a railway worker, the company adapts its exploitation to the general situation of production. For this reason a sectorial and corporate struggle does not make sense. The method of workers' autonomy is based on exporting the struggle, even if the immediate effects

(economic and work conditions) remain within the productive sector.

- The method is therefore that of permanent conflict and taking the struggle beyond the workplace.
- The objectives to be reached outside the workplace are the users of the railway service, especially commuters who must be constantly kept up to date with the evolution of the conflict within the company; and the same goes for the sectors of production closest to that of the railways (airways, road transport, postal services, telephones, contracting sectors, etc.).
- Hence the great importance of information in the autonomous organisation of the struggle. Obviously in the beginning the means available for this method of struggle will be inadequate compared to those of the trade union confederacy; however, even having recourse to leafletting; what matters most is working in the right direction, intervening constantly towards the users who must gradually be sensitized to the struggle of the railway workers and our perspectives. The same goes for the collateral sectors with whom it is necessary to make contact, favouring, whenever possible, the birth of other autonomous nuclei that can do the same kind of work.
- In this perspective the strike maintains its validity as a means of struggle, but must be seen critically, not as a means that automatically sets conflict in motion whenever the trade union leadership decides. The

strike in that sense becomes an instrument that puts an end to a situation of conflict, and is thus useful to the bosses and all those who have an interest in extinguishing concrete struggle. Another element against the strike as a means of struggle is the fact that it is an intermittent instrument that the counterpart always has warning of in advance, enabling them to intervene (for example, reducing personnel from goods trains and transferring them to passenger ones).

– Other means exist that can be used alongside the strike, or in the place of it, means that attack the company's productive output directly and that constitute a very effective threat.

– During a strike the technical procedure is arranged at union meetings. Reading these rules, one is amazed by the care that is taken to avoid any damage to the company. But, in the other direction, what does the company do to try to reduce the exploitation of the workers? All these precautions reduce the effectiveness of the strike as an arm in the attack against the bosses, and the responsibility for all that is also due to the legalism and conservatism of the unions. To hard and constant repression, we must oppose struggle without half measures and without warning: hard, constant struggle.

- The choice of means to be employed in a certain struggle, and the basic direction to be given to the information that has to be constantly circulated towards

the exterior, is decided by all those who belong to the Autonomous Workers' Nucleus, for which they must meet periodically.

C) Perspectives

- The concrete development of the struggle must be evaluated from time to time in the light of the objective situation, and not serve as a shield for vague and irresolute ideological constructions.
- Wage increase is one of the most important points of the struggle, because it allows the worker a greater capacity for resistance and the possibility of facing other battles that are just as important for his existence. This is not necessarily the main point of the Autonomous Workers' Nucleus, but, for obvious reasons it cannot be considered to be of secondary importance.
- The struggle for a different organisation of work is undoubtedly more interesting, because it indirectly supplements real wages in a way that cannot be taken back by the mechanism of devaluation. These indirect supplements to wages are elements of great value during the course of the conflict. A reduction in working hours, the refusal of mobility or accumulation of duties, total staff coverage, the improvement of working conditions, the modification of rules and working hours for drivers, ticket collectors, etc., the strengthening of installations, lines, locomotives, carriages, etc. are all elements that improve the general situation of the railway worker and can come to be a

part of real wages that are very much inferior to the sum written on the pay slip.

- The basic perspective in which a long-term struggle could be planned would be that of the base of the workers getting control of management, progressively removing it from the bosses and foremen who find themselves in secure positions with the unions' approval. In this way an example could be given, through a series of proposals re changes in management, and the organisational capacity of the workers, denouncing those responsible for the present disservice at the cost of the passengers and everyone involved.
- Capillary penetration in order to explain the mistaken position of the trade union struggles and their need to collaborate with the company, the impossibility of any change in this situation in the near future, and a return to struggle at the base. Struggle against the trade union structures and bureaucrats, not against union members.
- The final perspective is therefore that of autonomous management of the struggle, both for wages and working conditions, as well as the progressive taking over of management in its totality. Clearly this autonomy of struggle can only develop through a proper evaluation of the unions' position of collaboration with the bosses.

Conclusion

THE AUTONOMOUS WORKERS' NUCLEUS is an organism of struggle for the defense of the

Workers' Councils, Self-Management, and Developments

railway workers who mean to affirm the principle of autonomous struggle. For this reason it denies the validity of the trade unions, and denounces their collusion with the system.

On the basis of the principle of autonomy, the Autonomous Workers' Nucleus affirms the need for permanent conflict within the reality of production, and the need to export the essential characteristics of the struggle towards the exterior. The objectives of this communication with the exterior are the users of the railway service and the co-lateral productive sectors.

The methods necessary for the realisation of the defence of those involved and therefore of the whole productive collectivity are chosen in harmony with the principle of autonomy and permanent conflict. The validity of the strike should be questioned, and a great deal of attention paid to the search for other effective forms of struggle not so easily controllable by the company.

The perspectives of the Autonomous Workers' Nucleus are the constant ones of increasing wages and affecting working conditions, with the aim of safeguarding real wages which is the basis for all concrete possibilities of struggle by the workers.

MAB
Turin

Many problems have been raised in this work, with the awareness that they have only been done so in part, due to their wide complexity. We began from a situation of fact: that of Sicily, and a process of dismembering capable of causing incalculable damage in the near future. We have said how this process sees, in our opinion, a union of fascists and mafia, and how the interests that these people want to protect are substantially those of the Americans. The circulation of certain stale separatist formulae has obliged us to take as clear a position as possible, and seek to single out the essential points of anarchist internationalism in the face of the problem of the national liberation struggle. We have also given a brief panoramic sketch of a few of the interpretive defects latent in the orthodox Marxist view of the problem and a few strategic obtusities which in practice determine the not-small difficulties in which the Marxist-inspired national liberation movements find themselves.

*from “Anarchism and the
National Liberation Struggle”*

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